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METAL LEGEND
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CARTER CRUISE
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HUNGOVER WITH THE PRINCE OF INDIE POP:
MAC DEMARCO INVITES US HOME

HEATHER BENJAMIN
Goddess of the Erotic-Grotesque

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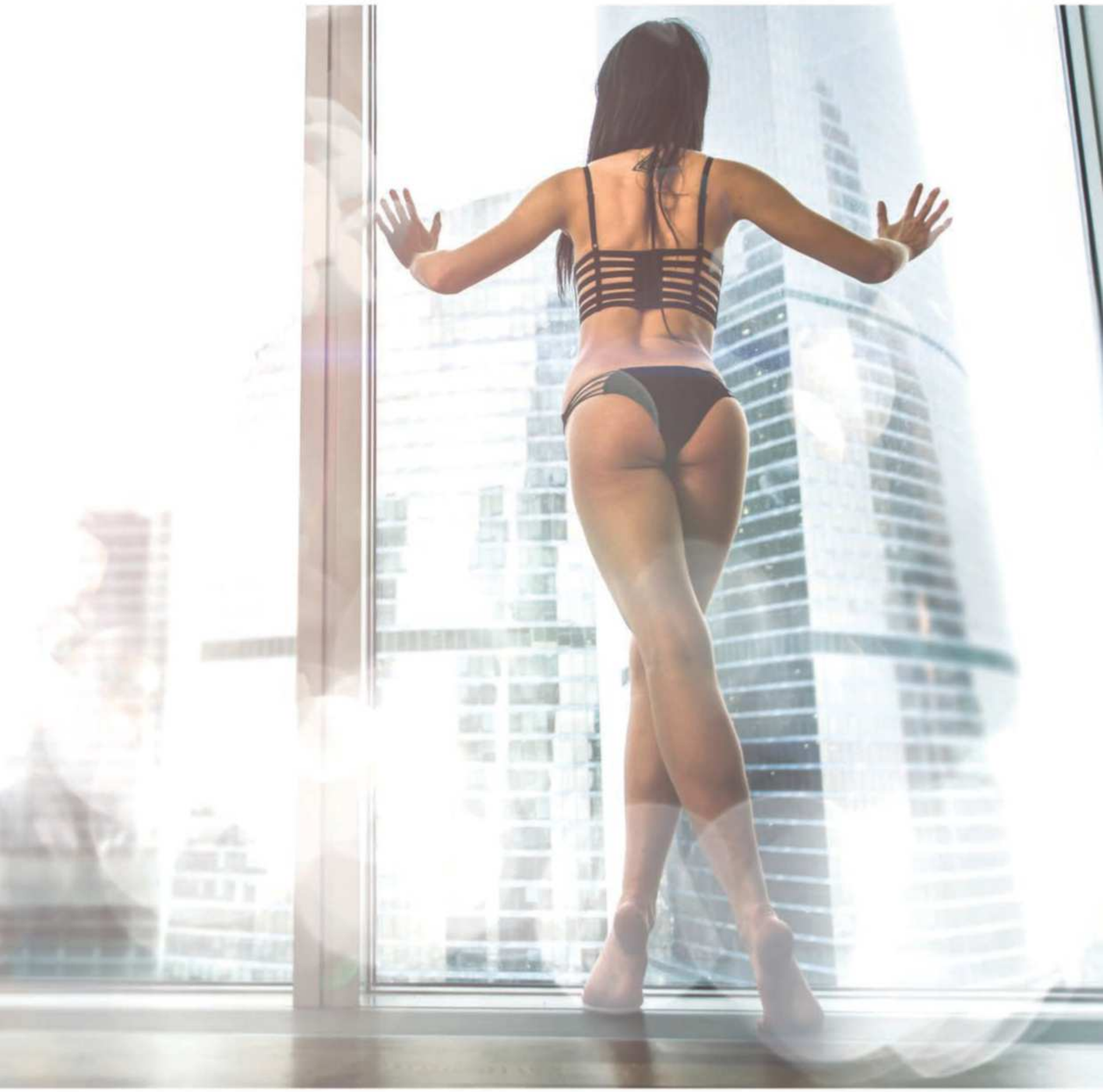

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FROM THE EDITOR

I DON'T understand people who are all "whatever" about music. Never have. Never will. My entire life has been soundtracked. Even if you don't realize it, yours has been, too.

Music is one of the greatest things to jog our memory. I used to do a column for VICE called "Remembering the Dumb Moments That Shaped Me Through Songs," where I'd write about the pinnacle moments I had in my twenties that are marked by certain albums. (The Misfits are nothing but romance in my head. Your life playlist doesn't need to make sense.) The Smiths' *Louder Than Bombs* soundtracked the aftermath of my first big breakup, where I had involuntary bulimia for weeks and cried 55 percent of the day. Hole's *Live Through This* was speeding down the Mount Seymour Parkway in my mom's minivan, trying to get home in time before being grounded. Cat Power's *You Are Free* was my first apartment, and that brutal winter depression after living off canned tomatoes and basmati rice for an entire year. Black Mountain's *In the Future* was long drives in the tour van, round and round the world, over and over. Lynyrd Skynyrd's *Second Coming* was my wedding day.

I'm biased. Music has not only been my true love, but half my career. I am so excited for you to eat up this issue. Not only do we have the incredible Ivy Wolfe as our Pet of the Month, and guitar teacher/model babe Hopeless SoFrantic as our CyberCutie, but we've got pieces on Matt Pike from Sleep, singer-songwriter Molly Burch, Violent Femmes cofounder Victor DeLorenzo, Shudder to Think's Craig Wedren, EDM DJ Carter Cruise, and, of course, the Prince of Indie Pop himself, my dear old friend Mac DeMarco.

Party on, Wayne!

Mish Barber-Way
Executive Editor
whatthefuck@penthouse.com

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HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLFE

October Pet of the Month

IVY WOLFE

PENTHOUSE®

OCTOBER 2018

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August Pet of the Month
Sloan Harper

MAIL DOMINANCE

Your August 2018 issue is the best that I can recall. It reminds me more than any recent issue of those initial qualities that made me love the magazine back in the 1970s. The commentary and investigatory articles have returned to compelling, thought-provoking, and even-handed [articles]. Please know that this is a winning formula for me! I hope you will continue doing exactly what you are now.

—Tony T., via email

[Ed: I wish I could have printed your entire email, Tony. Thank you for your kind words and appreciation for our work. In the 60s, 70s, and 80s, *Penthouse* magazine was a revolutionary publication with a powerful, provocative artistic and editorial vision. I'm trying my best to get us back there.]

I can't believe you put Blaire White in *Penthouse*!!!

—Karl K., via Twitter

[Ed: I can. Blaire White is a walking controversy. Name a better kind!]

I'm glad that most of your models have unenhanced breasts. That silicone shit was just getting boring. And, for purely photographic or artistic reasons, it's nice to see some pubic hair again. But please lighten up on the photoshopping. Too many of your models seem "bleached out." I'd rather see women as they actually are, not some wet-dream portrayal of a person without skin blemishes or forearm hair.

—Tom. K., via email

[Ed: Believe me, that computerized, fake, Plasticine bullshit is the bane of my existence and will be remedied for the next issue. No more!]

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

THE NEW MAID

A FEW months ago, I would've said that a French maid costume was silly and unattractive–unless you counted the fact that it was short. That was before I came home to my wife on all fours scrubbing the floor in full costume with no panties.

When I walked in the door from work, I thought for a second that I had caught her about to cheat on me, because she had never mentioned trying something like this in the past. The naughty smile she shot me over her shoulder made it clear I was the intended audience. She was wearing platform heels and fishnet stockings that stopped at the top of her thighs. I couldn't stop staring.

"I'm so sorry, sir!" she pouted from under lowered lashes. "I still need to clean the living room!"

I wasn't completely sure what she wanted me to do, so I went through to the living room and had a seat on a recliner. She disappeared into the kitchen for a minute and reappeared with a cocktail. She bent all the way over as she handed it to me, treating me to a glimpse of her nipples. I couldn't help sliding my hand under her neckline and rolling one of her nipples between my fingertips. She swatted my hand away playfully.

When she dropped to her knees again, I thought she was going to suck my dick, so I got rock-hard and ready, but she turned her back to me and started wiping at the floor with a cloth again. Her tiny, lace-trimmed skirt did absolutely nothing to cover her pussy or ass. I couldn't think how long it had been since I had been allowed to stare at her bare pussy without her getting self-conscious and stopping me. Her ass jiggled as she mimicked cleaning the floor. I sipped my drink while appreciating her sexiness.

She pretended to have found a spot that she couldn't get clean and had almost pressed her face to the ground with her ass in the air to look at it. It was too much. I wasn't sure exactly what she expected me to do in this game, but if she thought I was going to sit still while she teased me like this, she was mistaken. She was so close and so exposed that I could see how wet she was.

I slid to the floor behind her and spread her pussy with my fingers. She jerked out of my grasp and immediately went back to cleaning. I spread her pussy again, but this time I pushed a finger inside. She was so slick with arousal that it slid in easily.

I pumped my finger in and out, and she moaned.

"My naughty girl is already soaking wet. Are you turned on from teasing me?"

She giggled and moaned again. "I got off four times waiting for you to get home, just imagining what it would feel like when you finally got here and fucked me."

My wife was never normally one to talk about masturbating, and the mental image of her touching herself while she waited for me to get home was incredibly erotic. Next time, I would convince her to let me watch.

If she had already gotten off four times, I didn't feel like I had to be a gentleman and take care of her first. There could be time for that after. It was liberating to selfishly focus on myself.

I unzipped my pants and pulled my dick out. She kept her head down and her ass all the way up as I nudged against her wet pussy with the tip. I stopped there to savor the sensation, but she pushed back against me, driving my dick all the way inside her.

Her little white apron was tied in a bow around her waist, so I grabbed it with one fist and used it to pull her even harder against me. As I began thrusting in and out of her, it worked as the perfect handle

to keep her ass up high while I drove into her harder and harder.

I could feel that I was going to come quickly, but suddenly I had an idea. If she was doing things she didn't normally do, I thought I would see how far that extended. I pulled out and turned her around, yanking the front of her dress down to expose her perky tits.

I stood up and stroked my dick, making it clear what I was about to do. I was about to come on her tits. I thought she might stop me, but instead she tilted her head back and thrust her chest even farther out in invitation.

I stroked my cock a little longer, then unloaded all over the pale skin of her mounded breasts. When I was finished, I rubbed my dick along her nipples just to feel them sticky and wet with my mess.

The hottest part? She looked me straight in the eye as she said, "I better clean that up for you, sir!"

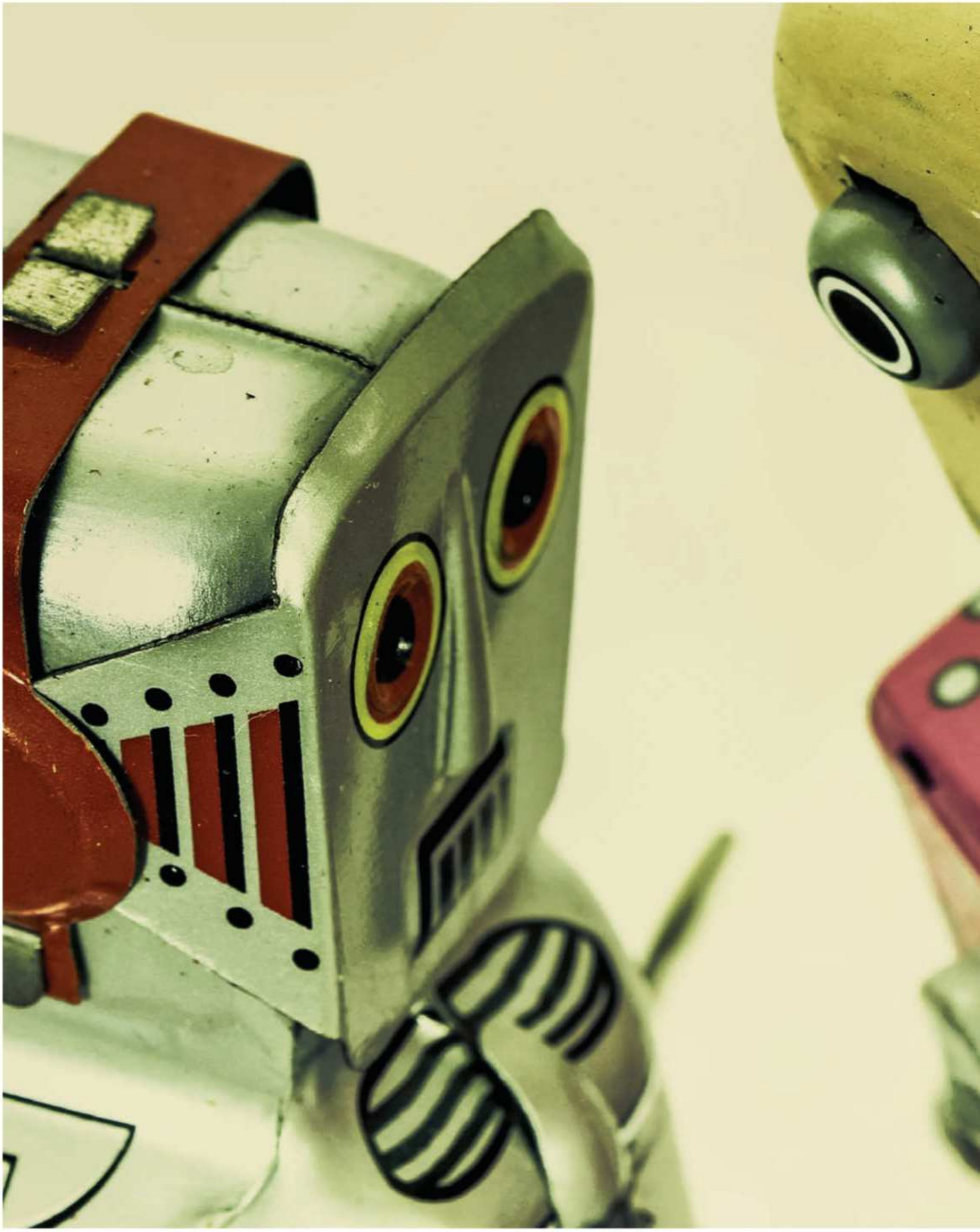
She wiped the come off her tits and licked it from her fingers, swallowing every last bit. When she was finished, she used her mouth to clean my dick.

I had no idea my wife was so into role-play, but now I can't wait to see what else she wants to try.

—Michael D., Galveston, Texas

CONTINUED ON PAGE 126

Seeing is believing. When you've had the encounter you've been hoping for, let us know about it! Send your letters to: *Penthouse* magazine, 8944 Mason Avenue, Chatsworth, CA 91311, or email us at letters@penthouse.com.



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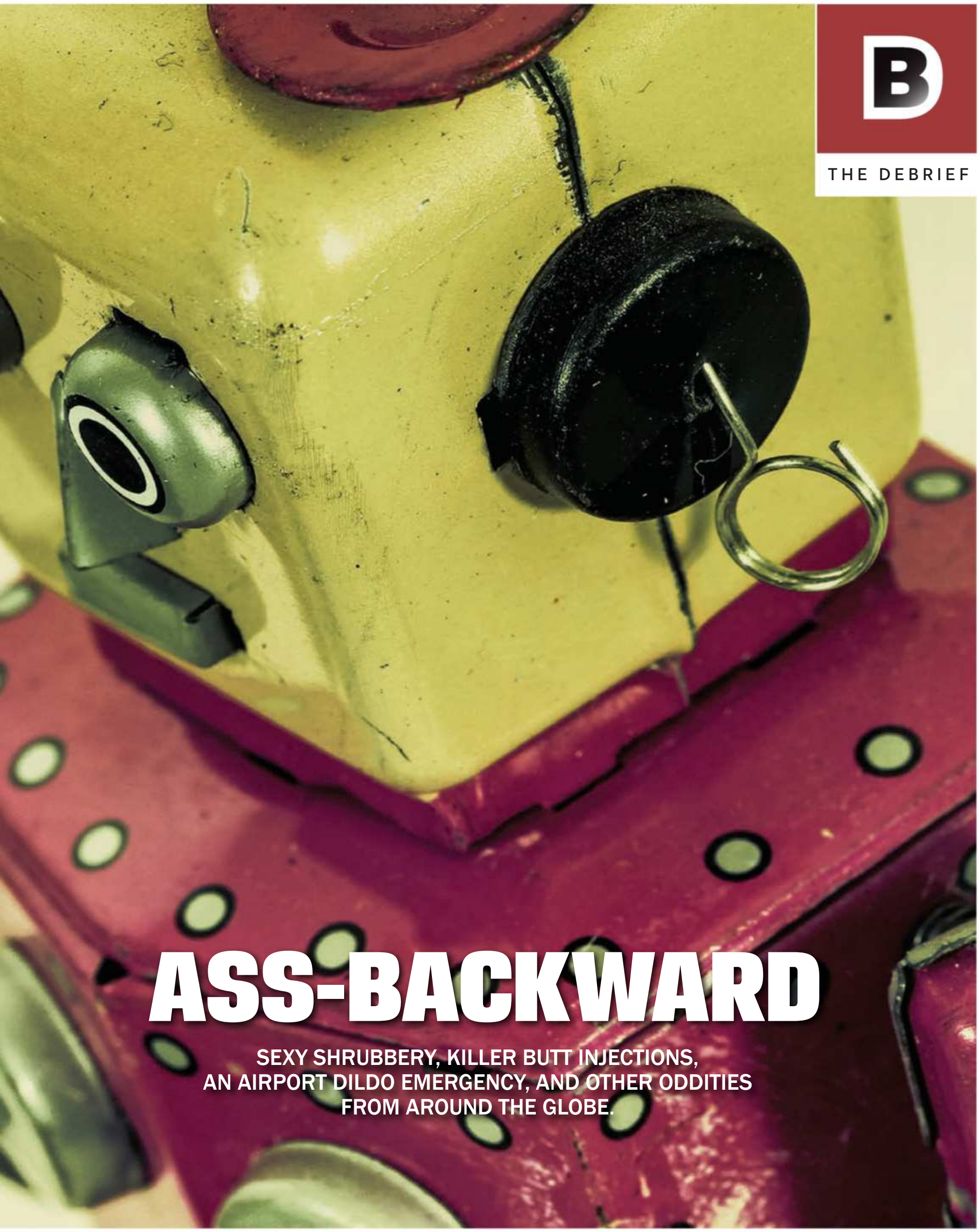


ASS-BACKWARD

SEXY SHRUBBERY, KILLER BUTT INJECTIONS, AN AIRPORT DILDO EMERGENCY, AND OTHER ODDITIES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ BY SUKPAIBOONWAT

MALE DOGS LIE ABOUT THEIR SIZE, TOO

IT'S common wisdom, as well as a joke that never stops being funny, that any guy who makes a point of telling you he has a big dick is more likely totin' something around the size of an acorn. Part of true "big dick energy" is never having to brag about it. People can tell without you having to say a single word. In fact, when you start talking about how big it is, they can usually sense that you're packing a Tic-Tac down there.

If dogs are truly man's best friend, guys who are deeply insecure about their penis size can also take comfort that *male dogs lie about their size, too.* It turns out that smaller dogs will aim their pee stream higher so that you think they're bigger than they actually are.

In a new study from the *Journal of Zoology* titled "Urine marking in male domestic dogs: honest or dishonest?," a group of four scientists who apparently share the same odd interest took the time not only to film a variety of male dogs peeing—the study actually states, without a hint of shame or humor, "We videotaped urinations of adult male dogs and, afterwards, measured height of urine marks"—they also made the effort to *measure the freakin' angles* of the urinary trajectory between the dog's penis and the tree or fire hydrant or wall in question.

They were so dedicated to figuring out the answer to the eternal question, "Do male dogs lie about their size, too?" that they filmed 60 dogs peeing, then measured the angles of their pee, then crunched the numbers, and then wrote a scholarly and unintentionally hilarious paper about it. THAT, dear reader, is dedication.

The study states: "Assuming body size is a proxy for competitive ability, small adult male dogs may place urine marks higher, relative to their own body size, than larger adult male dogs to exaggerate their competitive ability….[Therefore] scent marking can be dishonest in certain circumstances."

We will also assume body size is a proxy for competitive ability, just as we will assume that having a bigger dick is a proxy for sexual desirability and prowess. We will also assume, based on hard, dirty experience and not the findings of this quartet of weirdo scientists who yearn to learn more about dog pee, that small dogs who aim their pee at a high angle want you to think they have bigger dicks than they actually do.

Not that small dogs can't have big dicks. We've noticed in passing, while strolling city streets and public parks, that there are certain male Chihuahuas and Pomeranians who really should be making porno films. We don't want to defame an entire weight class of canines as having small penises, because as with every pattern, there are exceptions. We've seen it with our own eyes.

However, based on hard science, we must conclude that on average, small dogs are insecure about having small dicks.

VAPING AVIATOR TERROR

IN last month's Debrief we brought you the story of the trucker who crashed his semi when he went to swat a bug. Thankfully, no one was hurt and the dude's spilled cargo (rolls of plastic sheeting) just had to be cleared from a stretch of interstate.

The vaping Air China copilot didn't end up hurting anybody either, but he caused a terrifying in-flight emergency that could have been a disaster.

Back in July, a plane carrying 153 people and nine crew members left Hong Kong for Dalian, China. When the plane reached 33,000 feet, the copilot felt an irresistible urge to vape. Seeking to keep fumes from his prohibited activity from drifting into the cabin, he went to turn off a cockpit circulation fan. Here is where we point out that when you're flying a passenger jet, there's not much margin for error. You can't hit the wrong switch. But as if he was already buzzing from a flavored e-cig hit, the copilot fucked up. The switch he toggled cut off the flow of outside air.

Depressurization followed. A warning system activated. Oxygen masks deployed in the cabin. And the pilots had to point the nose downward and descend 25,000 feet in ten minutes to reach more breathable air. Phone-photos taken inside the cabin showed scared passengers, oxygen masks on, wondering why their plane was plummeting.

No voice crackled over the intercom to say, in Chinese, "Sorry about that. We had a little mishap up here. My copilot decided to break out his Juul."

Normally, we expect screaming babies, a dude in 23A with a bubonic cough, and a kid kicking the back of our seat. We don't expect cockpit vaping. But according to Chinese media, this may not have been the first time a pilot took a drag on an e-cigarette mid-flight.

The plane did re-ascend and land safely in Dalian. But aviation experts point out that had a subsequent depressurization occurred, the oxygen tanks that supply the cabin masks would have been low or empty. As for the two pilots, Air China said, "Buh-bye."

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / BY SKYCOLORS

TRIMMED FOR YOUR PLEASURE

PEOPLE just can't keep their hands off his shrub.

That's what happens when you create the world's sexiest hedge sculpture. Eighty-four-year-old designer, silversmith, and topiarist Keith Tyssen, of Sheffield, England, turned a six-foot stretch of privet hedge into a "sexy goddess" (his words) years ago. The green design, lovingly named Gloria, features a female form, complete with shrubby C-cups, sitting half-reclined in a come-hither position, knees drawn up and spread in sensual invitation.

Gloria turns heads outside Keith's house on a Sheffield street. And dozens of times over the years, he recently told England's *Telegraph* newspaper, he has been awakened by drunk passersby "interfering" with his living work of art.

They mount Gloria, pull apart her vegetative legs, and simulate coitus. Their friends howl merrily. Or as Keith puts it, "It's too banal to talk about what they do to her. Even the girls go crazy and hysterical with laughter as they jump around on her."

Gloria's creator says most people appreciate the artistry. His hedge is something of a local landmark, with college kids posing for graduation photos before it. But then, laments Keith, you have "drunken revelers" who "lose their ability to be sensible at four or five A.M."

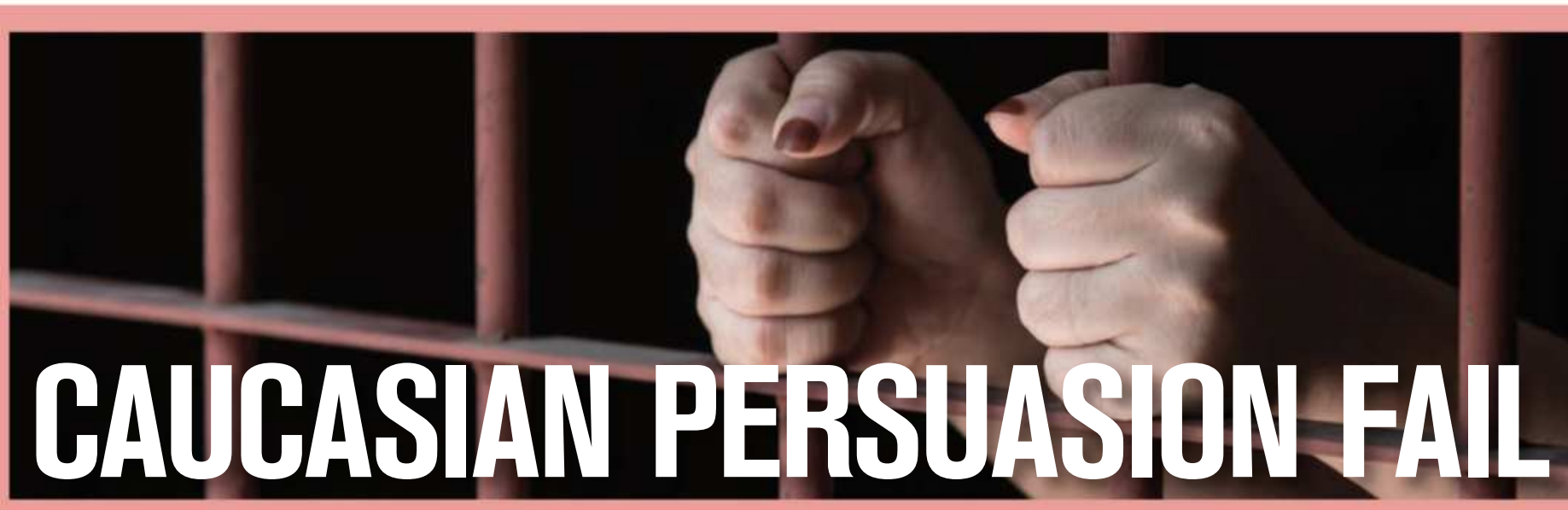
These naughty encounters require careful repair work, since Gloria "gets molested in such vicious ways." Adds the former art professor: "She never quite recovers."

Still, Keith's love for his creation—and the way it makes people smile—is enough for him to get out there every week and clip, making sure the alluring shrub keeps its shape.

He even seems to understand how Gloria's hotness brings out the beast in inebriated blokes. It's a testament to his artistry, really, since his goal was to "make the lady as sexy as possible, which is difficult as she is just a privet hedge."

Prune on, Keith, prune on.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / BY WELCOMIA



CAUCASIAN PERSUASION FAIL

YOU can't blame her for trying. But you can blame her for what she tried.

A 33-year-old real estate agent celebrating her birthday got loaded and baked one August night in the town of Bluffton, South Carolina. After leaving a restaurant, she blew through a stop sign in her white Ford Fusion, traveling at 60 mph in a 30-mph zone.

A siren blared. Police officer Baker Odom pulled Lauren Elizabeth Cutshaw over, noticed telltale signs of drinking, including slurred speech, and before long slapped handcuffs on the birthday girl and introduced her to the backseat of his cruiser.

That's when she began trying to talk herself out of a DUI.

The blonde, attractive Cutshaw, whose blood-alcohol level tested at .18, told Odom, "I'm a pretty girl, please, don't make me go [to jail]." She began sobbing. She apologized profusely. Fearing ruination, she said she'd never "missed a beat" up until that point in her life. She went on like this for 20 minutes, all of it caught on dash-cam video.

Drunkenly pleading her case, Cutshaw emphasized that she didn't have a criminal record. But that wasn't all. Casting her mind back years, to college and high school, she stated that she had been a cheerleader, a National Honor Society member, a sorority sister, and had graduated from a "high, accredited university."

Cutshaw continued, "I was almost valedictorian," and she cited grade-point averages of 3.8 and 4.0.

By then cops had also found weed and rolling papers in her car, so it was going to be a tall order for Cutshaw to jabber her way to freedom.

She kept at it, though, moving from her résumé to other qualities. By now at the station, she called herself a "a very clean, thoroughbred, white girl." When asked what her race and hygiene had to do with anything, Cutshaw responded, "You should know what that means based on the people that come into this room."

It was all for naught. In fact, as Officer Odom pointed out in his report, her endless vouching for herself just made her seem drunker. Or as he dryly put it: "Making statements such as these as a means to justify not being arrested are unusual in my experience as a law-enforcement officer and I believe further demonstrate the suspect's level of intoxication."

Cutshaw was charged with driving under the influence, speeding, and marijuana possession.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / BY ANUCHA PONGPATIMETH

OPERATIC BRUTALITY

HUMAN-RIGHTS groups call it music torture. They're referring to the use of loud, repetitive, sometimes annoying as hell, sometimes culturally assaultive music to break the will of imprisoned jihadists, a hunkered-down enemy force, or—as in the case of former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega—a strongman holed up in an embassy.

When it came to Noriega, the U.S. Army parked loudspeaker-equipped Humvees outside his safe house and blasted songs by the Clash, Guns 'N' Roses, and Van Halen ("Panama," of course), day and night, at ear-splitting volume. With jihadists, they've used Metallica's "Enter Sandman," Barney the purple dinosaur's song, and David Gray's "Babylon," reportedly just playing the titular refrain over and over. (Good God.)

And now, just in time for the Music issue, we have some Slovakian music torture. However, this time it's a citizen inflicting sonic pain on her fellow citizens, by way of Placido Domingo singing opera.

Yup, Éva N. cranked a four-minute aria from Verdi's *La Traviata* on repeat from six in the morning until 10 P.M. for 16 years. She began in 2002, supposedly in response to a barking dog, and just kept going. Using balcony speakers. On a quiet, small-town street. A recording that ends with an audience whistling, catcalling, and shouting, "Bravo!" How she didn't get offed, even with her fenced property, security cameras, and drawn blinds, remains a mystery.

Property values on the block dropped. Éva N. kept appealing a cease-and-desist order all to the way to the supreme court. Happily the court recently upheld the injunction, and on August 7 police arrested Éva N. and hauled her to the pokey.

No more breakfast, lunch, dinner, and bedtime Placido. We think a certain purple dinosaur's song should be piped 24-7 into a soundproofed cell holding a new Slovakian prisoner. At least for seven or eight months.

Éva N. faces three years in prison for "malicious persecution."

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / BY GALLKS

A BUTT TO DIE FOR

IS Kim Kardashian's ass "to die for"? In fact, is *any* ass worth losing your life over?

That's a serious question, because more than one woman has died in the quest to surgically enhance her buttocks.

Word out of Brazil is that celebrity plastic surgeon Dr. Denis Furtado, aka "Dr. Bumbum," is being charged with murder after a buttocks-enhancement surgery performed in his home went fatally wrong.

Dr. Furtado, who claims to have performed over 9,000 ass enhancements and has over 650,000 followers on social media, is accused of using over 300ml of a synthetic resin known as PMMA on a woman named Lilian Calixto—an amount several times over the recommended safe level for humans. Two hours after the injection, Calixto died.

Furtado went on the run after Calixto's death but was apprehended four days later.

This is not the first time a woman died in the quest to endow herself with the perfect ass:

- Early in 2018, 34-year-old Kelly Mayhew died moments after receiving silicone injections from a fake female plastic surgeon in a Queens, New York, basement. Instead of calling 911, the phony "doctor" grabbed her keys and vamoosed in her SUV.
- In 2015, a nurse from Dallas, Texas, named Wykesha Reid died after her fourth butt injection from non-licensed practitioners went tragically wrong.
- A British woman named Joy Williams, who reportedly "struggled with self-esteem and was bullied in school," traveled to Thailand in 2014 for a $3,000 butt-injection procedure from an unlicensed doctor. Her buttocks quickly became infected and she died as she was being wheeled into an operating room for a procedure intended to save her.
- Former Miss Argentina Solange Magnano died in 2009 from a blocked lung artery due to complications from butt-enhancement surgery.
- Vinnie Taylor of Wilmington, North Carolina, was arrested and charged with murder in the death of Scharelene Chiom Adamma Alugbuo, a woman with an extremely complicated name who died of respiratory failure after Taylor allegedly injected her posterior with silicone at a Comfort Inn. Alugbuo reportedly began gasping for air shortly after receiving the injections and died four days later.
- In 2017, Mayra Lissette died after receiving silicone injections from Guadalupe and Alejandra Viveros, New York's infamous "Silicone Sisters."
- A woman named Shatarka Nuby died in federal prison in 2012 after receiving butt injections from Oneal "Duchess" Morris, who was born a man but identifies as a woman and was suspected of injecting Nuby with a cocktail containing "cement, mineral oil, bathroom caulking, and Fix-a-Flat tire sealant."
- At a 2015 "silicone party" in California, a transgender woman named Katya De La Riva gave up the ghost following respiratory complications in the wake of silicone injections.

These are but a handful of the stories involving women who lost their lives in a failed quest to make themselves truly bootylicious.

The moral of the story? Even the world's most perfect ass is useless if it's sitting in a casket.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / B-D-S PIOTR MARCINSKI

DILDO PARALYZES BERLIN

IF you know anything about Germans, German history, and all those nasty rumors about Germans, you'll know that they're really weird about sex, especially poop. No shit—Germans love themselves some shit.

Then there's the whole thing about Hitler supposedly having a micropenis and one ball and how he could only get off when women shat on his face.

As interesting as all that might be, it really has nothing to do with this story besides being about Germans and sex. That's all you'll hear about Hitler and feces for the time being. If that disappoints you, you're not getting a Christmas card from us this year.

Instead, this story is about a bag of sex toys that was mistaken for a bomb and, as a result, temporarily shut down part of Berlin's Schönefeld Airport. If you think in monster-movie terms, call it *The Dildo That Paralyzed Berlin*.

A day after Frankfurt's main airport was shut down over a legitimate bomb scare—a family was allowed to pass through security while actually carrying explosives—Germany's equivalent of TSA agents were feeling understandably skittish, which is why in Berlin they might have done the emotional equivalent of premature ejaculation and shut down an entire airport terminal over what turned out to be a humble satchel of sex toys.

After shutting down Terminal D, the bag's owner was summoned over the loudspeaker to account for its contents. Surrounded by police who probably reminded him of the Gestapo—okay, we promised not to mention Nazis, but you have to admit it always adds drama—he initially said the bag contained "technical stuff."

It took an hour-long interrogation—we would KILL for a transcript—until the embarrassed airline passenger finally broke down and admitted that the "technical stuff" was, technically, a bunch of vibrators and dildos.

That is all the news accounts currently reveal, so we'll improvise at this point: After confessing that his bag was stuffed with sex toys, the humiliated passenger went into a long and entirely unconvincing explanation that they were not HIS sex toys, of course, but rather those of a woman with whom he's been in a torrid and mutually satisfying long-distance affair, and he was delivering these toys to her because the last time she visited, she flaked out and left them at his house.

The dildo-hauling passenger then went on to explain that his girlfriend doesn't really need the sex toys because he is a more than capable partner who has both the anatomical and technical gifts to deliver any woman on Earth orgasm after orgasm.

This next part probably is true: After the red-faced passenger walked off with his bag o' dicks, the airport officials had a tremendously satisfying laugh.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / BY ANOTHERCHANCE

ROBOT BEGS FOR ITS LIFE

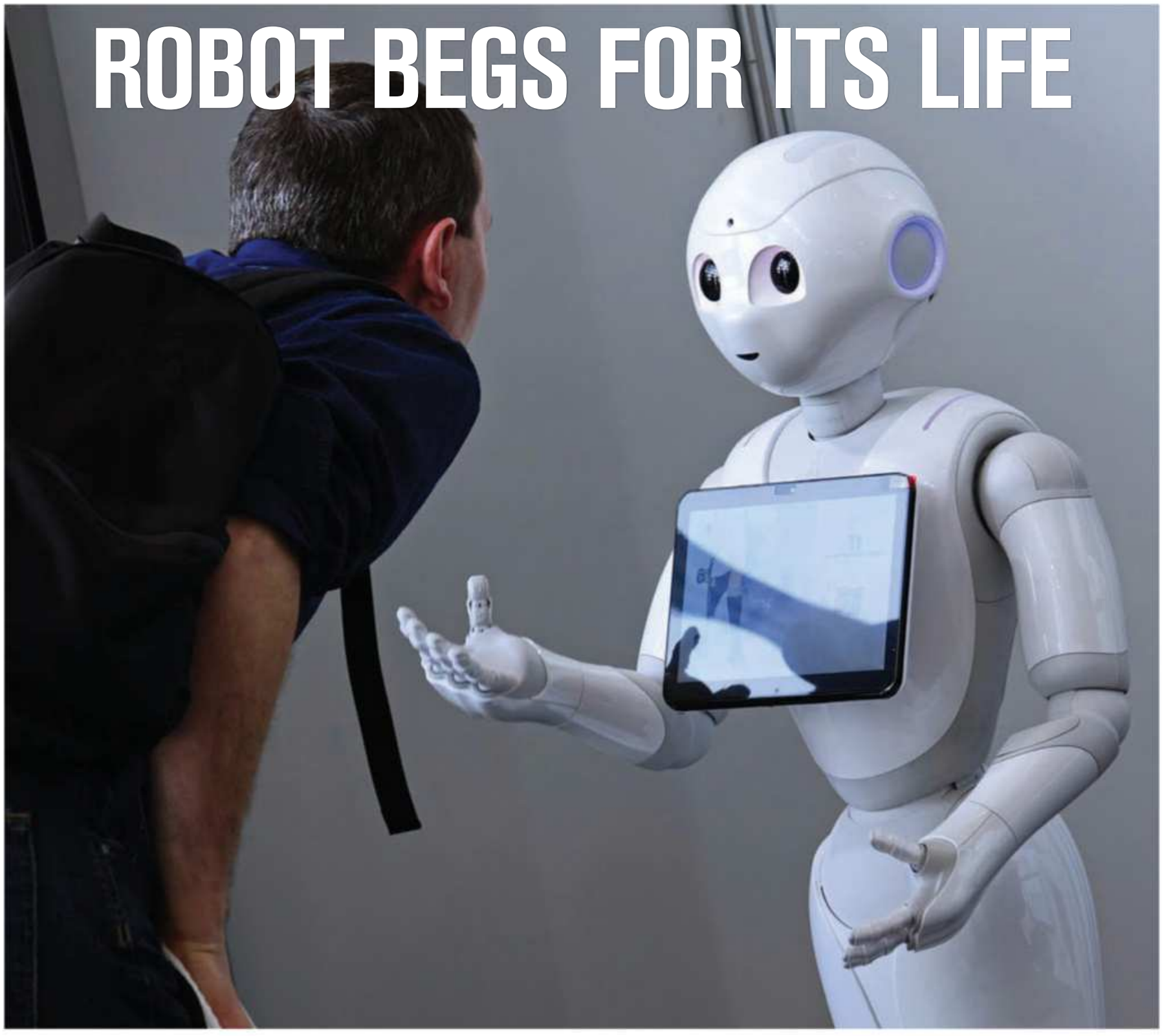


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / BY MIKEDOTTA

IF, like us, you waste away your days in abject terror of the inevitable juncture when robots become smart enough to enslave all humans and make us do their work for them, a new study will not give you a smidgen of comfort.

It turns out that robots, like women, are masters of emotional manipulation.

A new study in the journal *PLOS One* titled "Do a robot's social skills and its objection discourage interactants from switching the robot off?" concluded that robots have become canny enough to make humans feel bad about flipping the OFF switch and effectively killing them, if only temporarily.

In the study, German researchers paired up 89 volunteers with a tiny, adorable humanoid robot named Nao, whose most striking physical feature is a pair of puppy-dog eyes that even we find irresistible.

After asking Nao a bunch of dumb questions, such as whether he likes pizza–which is cruel, seeing as how modern robots remain incapable of enjoying pizza or, for that matter, even eating it–volunteers were then instructed to shut Nao down.

In half of the cases, Nao objected. We assume that in the other half of the cases, Nao found the people annoying and would have preferred a temporary death to another five minutes in their company.

In the 43 cases where Nao *did* plead to remain on, 13 volunteers completely buckled to the charismatic android's whims and refused to kill him. Of the remaining 30, they took on average twice as long to finally shut Nao off compared to the volunteers who didn't hear any objections from the robot.

Two of the test subjects who refused to switch off the robot explained their decision: "Because Nao said he does not want to be switched off," and "I felt sorry for him based on his statement that he is scared not to wake up again (or something like that)."

On the surface this seems compassionate, but is it wise?

We've often wondered why the same people who want to "save the whales" seem absolutely oblivious to the fact that, if given the chance, the whales would most definitely NOT save them. If you think that whales give a fuck about you, you have fallen for the whale's charms, you silly little fool.

Does anyone think that robots would be more compassionate than whales? And yet we would trust a whale with our car keys over a robot any day of the week.

The whole story only goes to show that while compassion may sound like a good idea, it may be misguided. So the next time you feel compelled to save a robot, ask yourself if the robot would do the same for you. If you feel the slightest bit uncomfortable about saving the robot, tell the robot that the Lord helps those that help themselves and walk away.

SCORE BARD

SHUDDER TO THINK FRONTMAN CRAIG WEDREN NOW MAKES HIS MAGIC BEHIND THE SCENES.

INTERVIEW BY SARAH WALKER

FOR those of us with more, *ahem,* discerning ears, film scoring–the instrumental music written to enhance a story's drama–can make or break a production. Ideally, it's a thing of beauty that transports us, conveying emotions the images cannot. In reality, it can be an unrelenting assault on the senses, or overly dramatic schmaltz that offends our intelligence.

But not when it's the work of L.A.-based film composer Craig Wedren.

"I always look at the music as the final character–this ghost that floats through," says Wedren. "You're not aware of it, you don't know why you're thinking or feeling the way you are, and this is frequently because of this all-important, nonverbal final character."

Wedren's composing style is versatile by nature–after all, pros have to adapt to each project and whatever music is required. But what catches our ear every time are his more languid, atmospheric scores, which is unexpected for someone who started out in D.C.'s legendary Dischord Records scene, fronting the post-punk band Shudder to Think (think Fugazi-type hardcore, but with Wedren's dreamy, operatic pipes). But as the band achieved major-label status in the 1990s, touring with groups like Smashing Pumpkins and Pavement, Wedren's interests began to drift toward film scoring, and in 1997, he and his bandmates hit the mother lode: writing and performing songs for Todd Haynes' glam-rock opus, *Velvet Goldmine,* and composing scores for Jesse Peretz's adaptation of Ian McEwan's *First Love, Last Rites,* and Lisa Cholodenko's debut feature, *High Art.*

Shudder to Think eventually disbanded, but Wedren's newfound career took off. Twenty years later, this professional film composer has a résumé full of winners, including David Wain's *Wet Hot American Summer* and Richard Linklater's *School of Rock,* along with an impressive list of TV credits, like *Hung, Reno 911!,* and *The United States of Tara.* In 2017, Wedren and Pink Ape–the name of his studio as well as his soundtrack "collective" of musician and composer friends–created the score for the hit Netflix series *GLOW,* and he also released an electro-acoustic solo record, his first since 2011, titled *Adult Desire.*

We had the pleasure of chatting with the very busy Wedren, who just turned 49, while he was on vacation with his extended family–wife, children, parents, in-laws–in coastal Maine. In honor of our interview, he jokes, "Everyone is walking around topless with cocktails." Huzzah!

Let's start with the movies you watched growing up.

Up until my junior year in high school, I lived in Cleveland, which was this cultural catchall, so anything my friends and I could get we absorbed. We were late-70s/early-80s boys, so it was *Corvette Summer, Star Wars,* and *Caddyshack,* and as we got older our tastes got weirder and artier, like *Cat People* and *Liquid Sky.*

Did you pay any attention to the music?

I don't know if I was aware of movie music as a separate thing, but I was obsessed with the *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack. My big introduction to punk and new wave was the soundtrack to *Times Square,* which had songs by the Cure, Patti Smith, XTC, and all the bands that would feed into Shudder to Think, my own output, and eventually my film stuff–the more atmospheric background music. I don't know that my friends and I were conscious of it, but what was embedded most deeply into our aesthetic DNA was music and movies.

You're still involved with your Cleveland friends, right?

I grew up with David Wain, who directed *Wet Hot American Summer,* and Stuart Blumberg, who directed *Thanks for Sharing* and has written a lot of different movies [including Lisa Cholodenko's *The Kids Are All Right*]. We were the Three Musketeers. We had bands together and we made videos and there were skits in David's basement and a little recording studio, so we were always generating this material. Then David and I went to NYU and he joined this sketch-comedy group that became The State.

This was the late 80s and I was already in Shudder to Think, and all of The State guys were in film school. I was listening to a lot of Brian Eno, Arvo Pärt, and different composers that fell somewhere between the kind of post-punk/new wave/ambient/4AD stuff [Cocteau Twins, Pixies] that was

PHOTO COURTESY OF CRAIG WEDREN

going on then and, like, cinematic classical background music. So when I wasn't doing Shudder, I was doing sound design for theater, making music for student films, or just recording experimental stuff, high with friends, on my little 4-track. It was a very natural, unconscious foray into what would become, essentially, film-score music.

The first movie I saw that Shudder to Think scored was Lisa Cholodenko's *High Art,* in 1998. How did that project come about?

Lisa was editing the film at Post 391 in New York—the same facility as Todd Haynes, who directed *Velvet Goldmine* [for which Shudder to Think wrote two songs]—and somebody mentioned us to her. She was like, *Who are these poser/wannabe queer/straight boys trying to make film music*? At first she was skeptical, but I watched a rough cut of the film and I had a vision. I knew exactly what the score needed to be. So I created a demo using wine glasses as the instrument. I gave her a DAT tape and it worked really well with the material.

Do you get a cut of the film you're working on and then figure out the music, or are you involved earlier in the process?

It depends. Frequently, producers and filmmakers are so overwhelmed keeping track of a thousand different elements of production that they don't think about the music until the very last second. Then you get a cut of a movie or TV show dropped into your lap with a hodgepodge of music they've grabbed from different scores and sources, and you go from there.

The flip side of that is, for instance, this movie I just did with Ken Marino, *Dog Days,* where there's a band in the story, so we had to figure out what this band sounded like. I recorded a bunch of music way beforehand that they could play along to on set. We also knew that there had to be a centerpiece—it's a romantic comedy, so there needed be that kind of classic love song for the montage in the middle. That was one of the first things that got written so [Ken] was able to play it for the actors and get everyone on the same page—melodically, atmospherically, and thematically.

In the case of *High Art,* I think Lisa cut the entire movie together without any temp music. Most editors will "temp" the film—which is to say grab music from wherever—while they're editing. Which makes sense, because technologically you have access to everything. But there are some old-school filmmakers who believe that you should cut the film so it plays well dry, before adding any music.

Do you have a preference?

I used to like to have things completely dry so I could come to it with fresh ears, but now I like knowing a director's tastes and what they're thinking. I don't mind having temp music to put me in the ballpark, but if they're too attached to it then it can become a drag—this is called "temp love," and it can take the wind out of one's creative sails.

Temp music is also good because sometimes I like to take apart another composer's work. Like, *Let's see, how did John Williams make this piece of music?* For *Reno 911! Miami,* there were a lot of big, classic scores temped in—*Jurassic Park* and God knows what else. I had only done smaller indie films at this point, so I was like, *Okay, I'm gonna get my crash course in big Hollywood film scoring.* I didn't go to school for this, I just kind of bushwhacked my way through. So that was really cool.

You scored the Netflix series *GLOW,* which has gotten great reviews. It's definitely a weird concept—women's wrestling in the 1980s. Did you think it would be this good?

I knew from the people involved that it was going to be a highly creative, intelligent, and fun project. Jesse Peretz, one of the executive producers, actually directed the very first movie that Shudder to Think scored, *First Love, Last Rites.* He was a friend of mine in the 90s, so we have a long history together. Then, Jenji Kohan, who created *Orange is the New Black,* was another executive producer. I know her through friends in L.A., and she's amazing and smart and she doesn't make bullshit.

I love your use of cheesy synth music—it really feels like the 1980s, not some greatest-hits rehash of that decade.

I remember *GLOW* when it was on [1986-89], and I was like, *What the fuck is this?* Before reading the Netflix script, I watched the documentary [Brett Whitcomb's *GLOW: The Story of the Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling*], and it had this amazing sub-hair metal music in it. Then when I read the script, it reminded me of Wang Chung's score for *To Live and Die in L.A.*—off the beaten path, and maybe a little lower budget than some of the more "designer" brand synth scores of the era, like [Giorgio] Moroder, Tangerine Dream, and Vangelis. So we came up with what I would call "off-brand" music [*laughs*].

What you describe makes me think of John Carpenter's *Escape From New York,* where the director scored and played half the instruments himself.

I love that movie. Now *that's* low-rent. It's almost like the band Suicide, which was this rickety-ass synth-punk duo from the 70s—two chords, really creaky and trashy. But it turns out they were the foundation for half the indie music that's been made in the twenty-first century. And I feel like John Carpenter's scores are like that. At the time, we were like, *Did he make this on a tin can?* It was just so primitive. But now, if you watch something like *Stranger Things,* anyone who's making a weird synth score owes a debt to John Carpenter.

Speaking of *Stranger Things,* how do you feel about all the punk/alternative music we listened to growing up now being used in all these mainstream movies, TV shows, and commercials?

I'm of two minds about it. On one hand, if the musicians are still alive to enjoy the spoils, I certainly understand, because it's really hard to make a living making the music that you want to make. For better or worse, that's one of the only games left in town—licensing for a movie or a commercial or a TV show. On the other hand, sometimes it's utterly ridiculous.

I remember hearing a Buzzcocks song in some commercial, and I was like, *What the fuck? The world doesn't make any sense!* There's this duality to it. There was this precious, secret music that was our little coven, but we also felt like: *This should be the big music!* You can't have it both ways. And of course it was the weirdos who ended up in creative jobs, like music supervisors, writers, directors, so inevitably you have these former freaks behind the controls of commercial output. So it makes sense that our peers making these commercials are like, *I love the Buzzcocks, let's put them in.*

Then there's the other phenomenon of the internet, which turns over every rock from the twentieth century, making all this stuff equally available to anyone. So this whole notion of our secret, sacred music is erased from the familiar categories we grew up with. With Shudder to Think, ours was beautiful music, but it was aggressively challenging at times. We wanted to be as big as Van Halen—that was our utopia. I don't know that we wouldn't have been disappointed had that happened, because there's a whole lot of weirdness that comes from popularity and commercialization, but that was what we hoped for.

To learn more about Craig Wedren or to stream Adult Desire, go to craigwedren.com

THE LONG AND WHINING ROAD

MUSIC IS GOOD. MUSIC ABOUT MUSIC IS NOT SO GOOD.

BY ZACHARY LIPEZ

SOME people believe art is more than a job, but some people believe in a very specific white-skin Jesus, and I don't see why one sort of self-regard should be less dopey than the other. I mean, believe in angels or believe you're special; it does no harm as far as that goes.

That being said, like people who brag about their IQs, the harm only comes when shit gets said out loud. While the fine-art world has seemingly resigned itself to largely being an endless circle jerk of commenting on its own existence, therefore keeping its audience limited to, well, fine artists and those who make money off it, music is still happily only, like, 20 percent living within its own asshole.

The 20 percent I'm talking about is the worst rock genre there is (worse even than crabcore, though maybe not as bad as crunkcore): Songs About Being in a Band. Those songs that operate from the premise that there's something inherently more interesting about playing three chords than being a carpenter or locksmith. Songs like The Byrds' "So You Want to Be a Rock 'n' Roll Star," Nirvana's "In Bloom," and Paramore's "Looking Up."

Now, I'm not claiming that being in a band isn't more fun or easier than those occupations. I'm not insane. But the only thing less cool than bragging is making that brag a whine.

The purview of the singer, to me, is sex and/or death. That covers a lot of ground, from political ranting to score-settling with contemptuous parents/teachers/gym coaches. But the ground it *shouldn't* cover is the gig itself. That's not interesting and it's not fair to the fan to force them to pretend it is, to ask all the teens to sing along to verses about bad A&R brunches as if it were their own deep-rooted pain.

To make the point finer: If pornography was about pornography, half the fun would disappear (though—*cough*—I imagine the remaining half would still get the job done). In the same way we want, say, Riley Reid to be a neighbor or an astronaut or whatever, we want a band to be something else, something either relatable (like a Bon Jovian working stiff) or aspirational (a Bowie spaceman, a Cobain Hamlet, a Freddie Mercury… Freddie Mercury).

Rock songs about performing rock songs (not be confused with rock songs about rock songs, like "Land of 1,000 Dances" or even Bob Seger's "Drift Away"—to me the worst rock song ever recorded) are just too self-aware, and then not self-aware enough. They're what happens when a band decides that the fan owes them their empathy, that they no longer need to use metaphor to get the listener engaged because the listener is so dense as to want to sing along to "We're an American Band," doing all the heavy lifting, while the band just describes what was included in their rider.

Why do rock bands do this? With hip-hop, well, hip-hop throws the whole thing off. It's a form with discussion of process baked in at its inception. Rappers have always talked about The Show and, having

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / BY LOSEV ARTYOM

learned either something or nothing from the history of blues and soul exploitation, they've always bitched about the industry. Rock bands share the same sense of grievance, though, unlike rappers, they're far more likely to extend their complaints to feeling misunderstood by their fans.

Fall Out Boy have forged an entire career talking about how they perceive their fans, and somehow convincing said fans to pigeonhole themselves. Pete Wentz might be the first man in history to beat the monkey's paw at its own game. He wishes for success, and gets richer complaining about it. Arguably, he's just following the template set by grunge mopers and their immediate corporate pop-punk descendants; we were misunderstood as teens and now we're misunderstood as 30-year-olds who dress like teens.

If you spend most of your time in a tour van/bus, playing shows, it's understandable that you want to write about your life as it's happening. And there have been some great songs that prove the exception to my petulant broad-sweep irritation. To my mind, the good songs about being in a band are the ones about being unloved and/or hopeful. Songs like "Formed a Band" by Art Brut, and "One Chord Wonders" by English punk band the Adverts, operate as calls to arm, letting the eternal kids know that anything and everything is possible.

But eventually, even the punks end up like Rancid, ignoring the whole "no gods no heroes" thing and indulging in the most egregious kind of self-mythology. The singer can cloak his/her nostalgia in fatalism, but if they're complaining about the open road being long (it's paved, baby, you should write a thank-you note to city hall, or at least the Romans) or their amps in any capacity, then I'm checking out.

Of course, my crying may be moot, like complaining about dinosaurs or moderate Republicans. History has largely wiped out the guitar band and, to be honest, most of the new breed are ladies who write songs about bastards and the state—two topics I get down with. But the flip side is that, while the rich get richer, the niche has grown nicher.

I worry that so many of my peers love Pup's "If This Tour Doesn't Kill You I Will" because, besides it being an undeniable jam, rock is in the same popularity rut that fine art is: its fans are mainly its practitioners.

Maybe, in a time when selling a few thousand records will put you on the charts, fans aren't fake-relating—they're listening from their own vans, writing their own songs about listening to Pup in said vans, passing other bands in vans on their own way to play for whatever musicians or publicists or label owners live in the next town, everybody pissing in the same bottles and calling it art or, worse, interesting.

Zachary Lipez is a writer and bartender in New York City. He is the author (with collaborators Stacy Wakefield and Nick Zinner) of 131 Different Things, which will be out in November.

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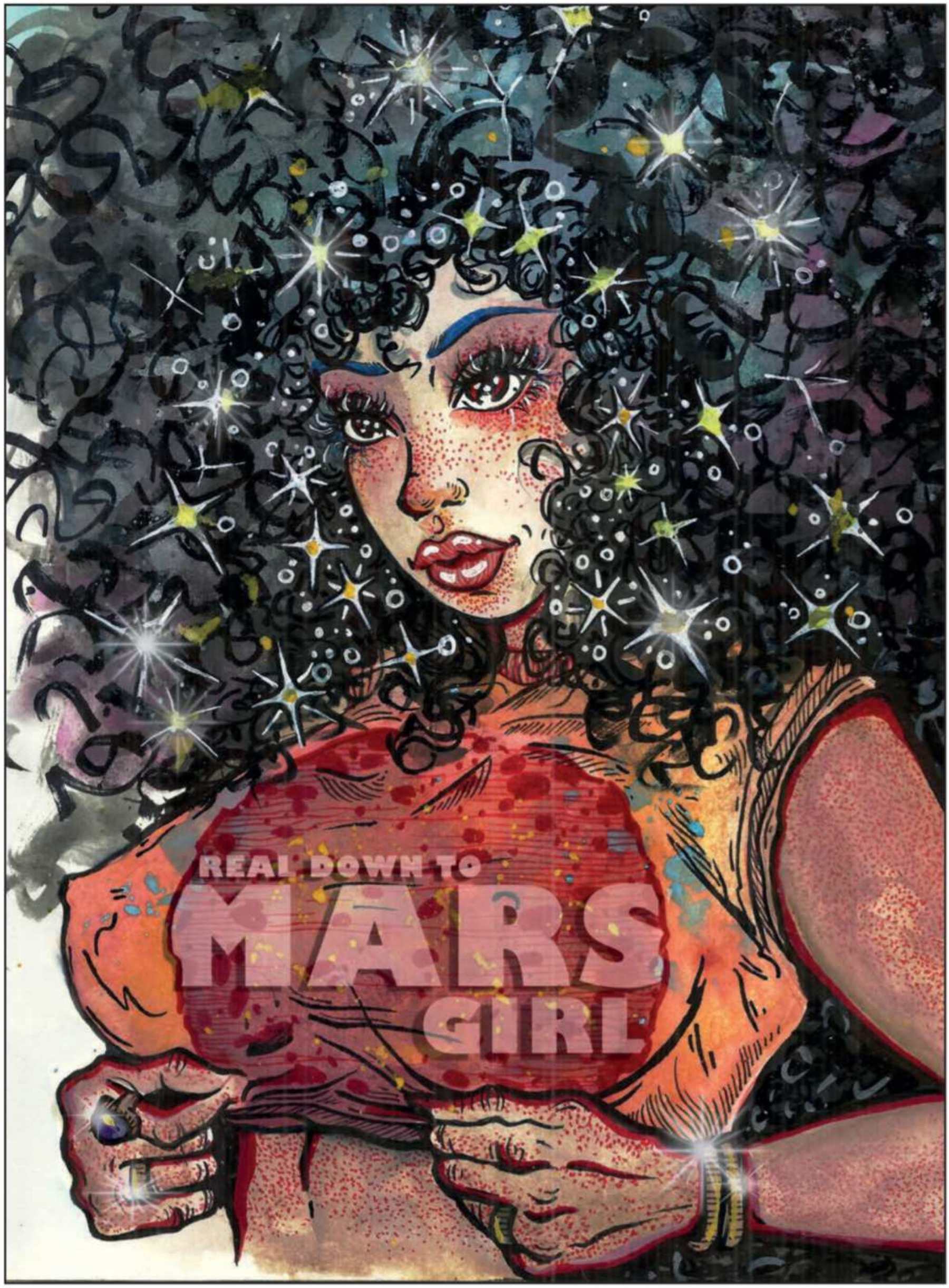

REAL DOWN TO
MARS
GIRL

MOLLY BURCH

Molly Burch is your typical Texan girl-next-door with a twist of mysterious vixen power. The 27-year-old singer-songwriter was so shy it took her almost a decade to get the stones to share her talent with the world, but once she did, she took off like a rocket, signing to indie star label Captured Tracks and debuting her deeply romantic album, *Please Be Mine*. Now she's back with her much anticipated sophomore release, *First Flower*. Burch's music swings playfully, showing off her dexterous, sexy voice on top of lounge-inspired riffs—think Judy Garland meets Billie Holiday with a jolt of modern twang. *First Flower* is a unique and soothing album that will toy with your senses.

Check out Molly Burch at mollyburchmusic.com or on Instagram: @mollyjburch

MELTIN
POT
Todd Francis

RANGE ROVER:
RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2
Rockstar Games (PS4, Xbox One)

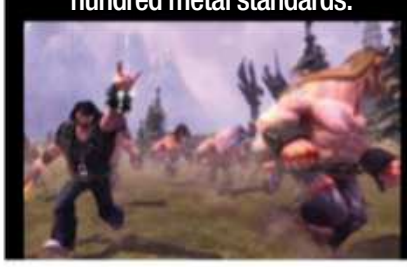
BILLY the Kid, Jesse James, Wild Bill Hickok—gunfighters were the rock stars of the Wild West, notorious for their oversized personas, unhealthy habits, and penchant for shooting a man for snoring too loudly. Rockstar Games' *Red Dead Redemption 2* delivers on the outlaw lifestyle like no other game. It's a mash-up of historical fact and spaghetti western set in 1899 frontier country. Players strap on the six-shooters of fictional rabble-rouser Arthur Morgan. He's the leader of one of the last remaining gangs in a Wild West about to be tamed. After a robbery goes awry, Morgan must lead his motley crew across the American heartland with bounty hunters and federal marshals in pursuit. Morgan's base of operations is a mobile bandit camp from which you can stage misdeeds in nearby one-horse towns.

Like the previous game (which you don't need to play to follow the story here), *Red Dead Redemption 2* doesn't dodge comparisons to Rockstar's other classic crime series, *Grand Theft Auto*. You can giddy-up and go wherever you want in an open world and take on a dozen dirty side activities, from hunting wolves to robbing stagecoaches, while progressing through the type of cinematic story that Rockstar is famous for. The scenery is no less epic, shifting from desert mesas to alpine forests to gator-infested bayous as you push across the country. Each town has its own lively characters—card players, Civil War vets, saloon keepers, brothel professionals—who go about their daily duties and react to your presence and notoriety. Pistol play is more *Django Unchained* than *Unforgiven,* letting you quick-draw and deal devastating bodily injuries. But just because you're an outlaw doesn't mean you have to be the bad guy. An honor system tracks how you treat bystanders. If you sling lead indiscriminately, they'll run you out of town. Gun down the town's local thugs at high noon and you'll become a folk hero—at least until the law catches up with you.

TUNED IN: FOUR MUSIC-INFUSED GAMES THAT REALLY KEPT THE BEAT

> 4 <
BRÜTAL LEGEND
(ELECTRONIC ARTS, PS3, XBOX 360, PC)

A pantheon of rock gods from Rob Halford to Ozzy Osbourne joins Jack Black in this hilarious 2009 homage to arena rock. Black plays a roadie whose enchanted belt buckle transports him to a world ripped from heavy-metal album covers. Wield an ax—and an ax guitar—to rock the faces of demonic adversaries while banging your head to a soundtrack of more than a hundred metal standards.



> 3 <
PARAPPA THE RAPPER
(SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT, PS ONE)

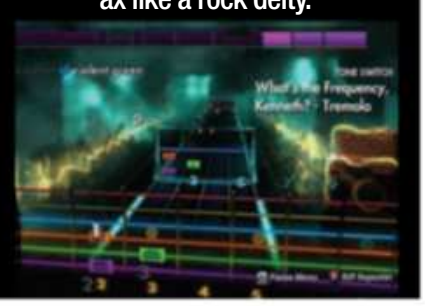
A game about a rapping spaniel looking for interspecies romance might not sound like the greatest thing to groove on, but *PaRappa the Rapper* popularized a genre that until 1997 had been a mere Japanese novelty. Any fan of the game can still quote the motivational lyrics of its catchy rap-alongs ("Kick! Punch! It's all in the mind!").

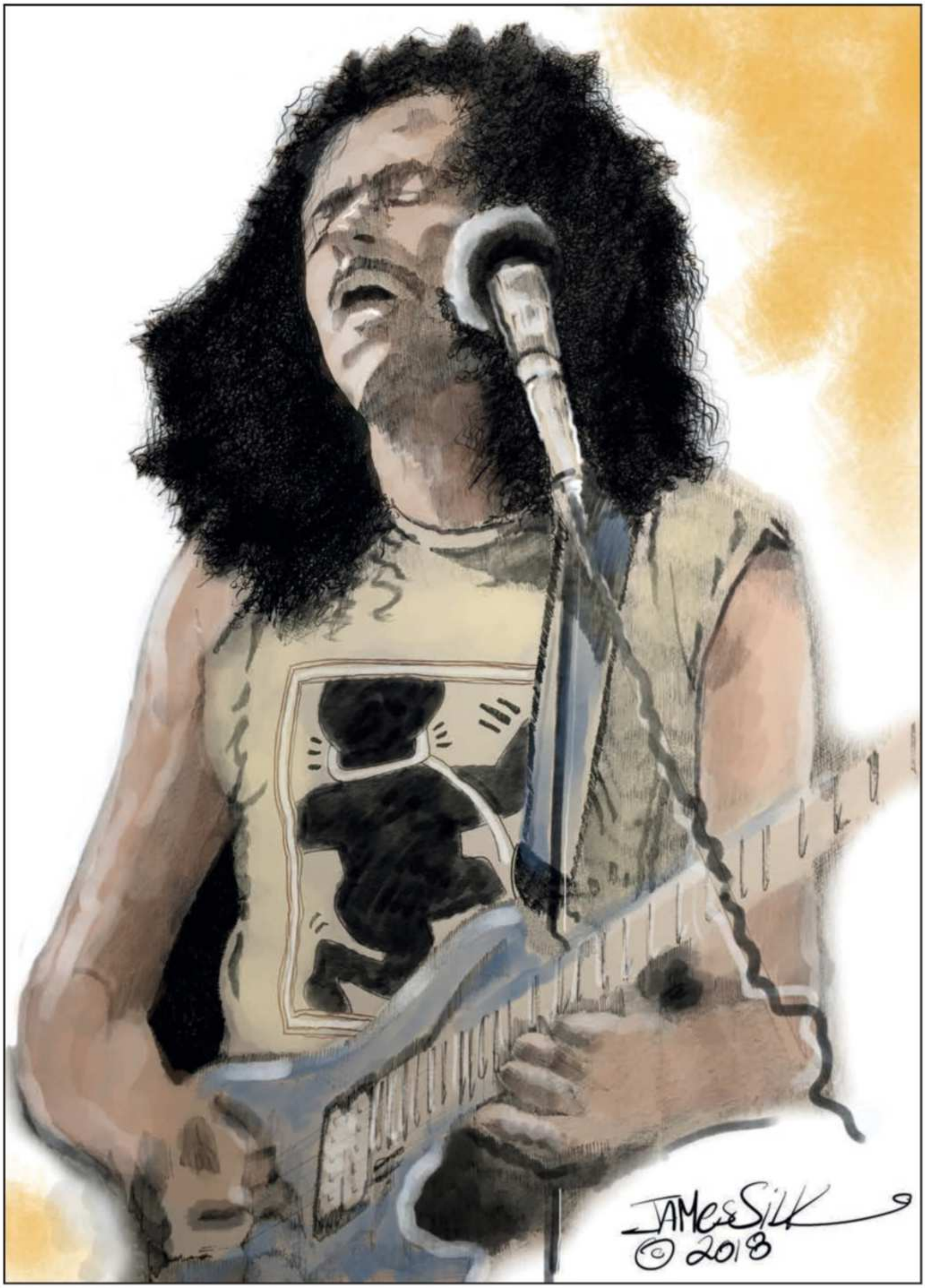
> 2 <
GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY
(ROCKSTAR GAMES, PS2, XBOX, PC)

Gaming's most notorious interactive crime spree might seem out of place in a list of revolutionary music games, but 2002's sun-soaked *Vice City* pioneered the use of a soundtrack as a tool to pull players into the world. The game featured more than 100 acid-washed 1980s hits that players cranked on their stolen car's radio as they cruised a stylized Miami's neon streets.

> 1 <
ROCKSMITH 2014
(PS3, PS4, XBOX 360, XBOX ONE, PC)

Unlike the *Guitar Hero* games that shipped with a plastic instrument, *Rocksmith* requires a real electric guitar to play—and it actually teaches you to play it using the same scrolling-note interface used in similar titles. The software adjusts its difficulty based on your fretwork. The better you get, the more notes it'll throw at you, until eventually you're handling your ax like a rock deity.

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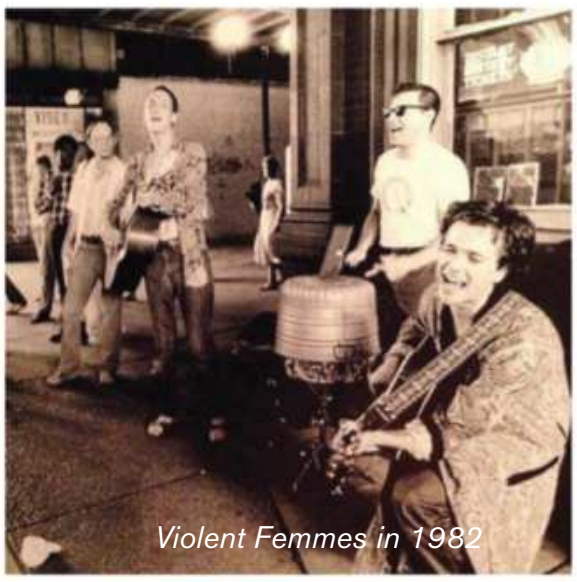
BEAT MASTER

VICTOR DELORENZO ON THE VIOLENT FEMMES, NEW SOUNDS, AND A LIFE IN MUSIC.

INTERVIEW BY PHIL HANRAHAN



Violent Femmes in 1982

PHOTOS THIS PAGE, LEFT TO RIGHT: (VIOLENT FEMMES) COURTESY OF VICTOR DELORENZO, (VICTOR IN HAT) BY JANET SCHIFF, (VICTOR DRUMMING) BY KAY COLLINS; NEXT PAGE: (INSET) BY DOUG SEYMOUR; PAGE 30: BY DOUG SEYMOUR

A MOMENT came in the early 1980s when Victor DeLorenzo, drummer for the Milwaukee folk-punk band Violent Femmes, smacked his snare twice, then double-struck again. You know this beat. You've heard it in baseball stadiums, basketball arenas. You've heard it in bars, while driving, in TV commercials, in the 1997 John Cusack hit-man comedy *Grosse Pointe Blank*. It's one of the most recognizable drumbeats in rock and roll history. All it takes is a few seconds of "Blister in the Sun," opening track on the band's 1983 platinum-selling debut album, and you can fire up thousands of people in a crowd.

Thirty years after "Blister" was released, DeLorenzo watched 65,000 Femmes fans in the desert at Coachella sing along and air-drum to this rollicking classic, with its ringtone-zippy acoustic bass line, gunshot percussion, and teen-angst lyrics ("When I'm out walking/ I strut my stuff/ and I'm so strung out"–*smack-smack, smack-smack!*).

We caught up with the legendary percussionist at his Milwaukee home studio, the Past Office, not far from where the Femmes got the attention of Chrissie Hynde and the Pretenders back in 1981. These days DeLorenzo plays in a drums-cello duo called Nineteen Thirteen, named for the year cellist Janet Schiff's Romanian instrument was made. He also paints, produces music, collaborates with his three musical children (son Malachi drums for Langhorne Slim and is an L.A.-based producer himself), and is gearing up to get back into acting, his first love. Will he ever reunite with bassist Brian Ritchie and singer/guitarist Gordon Gano for another Femmes go-round, continuing his on-again, off-again relationship with the band?

"If a chance came up to do a really good show, like Coachella," DeLorenzo muses, adding that his preference would be to gig the way they began: a trio, no one else onstage, their musical mayhem driven only by his minimal kit, Ritchie's bass, and Gano's guitar.

Here's more of our conversation with one of music's most innovative drummers.

We're close to where Chrissie Hynde first heard you guys. Can you tell that story?

The Femmes had a couple places where we liked to busk. One of them was underneath the marquee at the Oriental Theatre. One afternoon we were out there and this guy comes out of the theater, listens for a minute, kind of laughs. He heads to the corner drugstore, comes back, listens, smiles, heads into the theater. Ten minutes later he and four others come out. It's the Pretenders, but we didn't know. We were listening to Hank Williams then. Sun Ra. The Velvet Underground. They all lean against a car, listening, and eventually we start playing "Girl Trouble." When it gets to the chorus–"I got girl trouble up the ass"–Chrissie Hynde starts laughing like crazy. She thinks it's fantastic. She comes up and says, "Do you guys want to play a gig tonight?" We say, "Where?" She says, "Here. You know, play three songs or something. We can't pay you but you can have some food backstage."

So we play the gig. The warm-up act, a horn band, finishes, and guys start setting up for the Pretenders. The lights go down, the audience starts clapping, and then these three dorks come out onstage. People start groaning. Of course now everyone

Nineteen Thirteen cellist Janet Schiff with Victor DeLorenzo.

says they were at that gig and were rooting for us. I will say by the third song we had won over a few people.

How did the Femmes begin?

A musician friend of mine suggested I might want to meet this interesting bass player, and so I met Brian, and we did a little playing and thought it sounded pretty good. At first we were just a rhythm section. We went around town—we'd back a blues guy, a country guy, a couple rock guys. Then this same friend said, "You know, there's another kid on the scene you might want to check out. He's like a pint-sized Lou Reed imitator."

This was summer 1981. I'd just gotten back from Europe with Theater X, an experimental theater company I'd become a part of, having replaced Willem Dafoe when he moved to New York. Brian and I used to practice on the third floor of the theater building, which was empty then. Anyway, we went and saw Gordon play and afterward we asked him if he might want to join us. Gordon said [*imitates Gano*], "Yes, that would be nice."

"WE USED TO REHEARSE NEW SONGS IN FRONT OF AUDIENCES. PEOPLE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT. IT COULD BE A LITTLE BIT OF HEAVEN, A LITTLE BIT OF HELL."

The first time we all played together, we sat in with Gordon at a café. Brian had just put bass strings on an acoustic guitar, so it wasn't even a bass per se—he'd play it mariachi-style—and I had my snare and brushes. We just improvised, playing all these songs that ended up on the first album. We didn't even know the changes. I had my cassette-recorder going, and we later included a song from that gig, "Johnny," on a deluxe version of the album. What Brian and I did, improvising—that became one of the hallmarks of the Femmes. We used to rehearse new songs in front of audiences. People didn't know what to expect. It could be a little bit of heaven, a little bit of hell. That's what made us dangerous.

How'd you get the name Violent Femmes?

It came before we even knew Gordon existed. Brian's brother also played music and one day a guy asked him if his brother played in a band. Brian liked putting guys on, so off the top of his head he said, "Yeah, the Violent Femmes." He just made it up on the spot. Back then "femme" was local slang for crybaby, so he was also goofing on his brother. But a few days later Brian said, "Hey, I got a name for us." And he hit me with it. I remember thinking, *It doesn't matter if people like it or don't, at least they won't forget it.*

Any gigs or tours stand out?

I was just talking to someone about this. The B-52s. That was my favorite tour. We went around America in a couple of buses. They're the nicest people in the world. That was the first time we really melded with another band to create a touring family—no weirdness, no hierarchy, watching each other play every night. I just love them. Kate, Fred, everybody. The joy, the humor. They're so sharp, they're politically aware. Fred was always cracking me up. [*Imitates Fred Schneider in "Love Shack"*] "And bring your jukebox money!"

As far as individual shows, Carnegie Hall was a big one. Something incredible happened when we were onstage. We had this song "Black Girls," and in the middle of it there's a drum feature—I call it a feature, not a solo, since drums can't play by themselves—and I was getting ready to play the feature, vamping on the drums, my eyes closed, thinking about all the great musicians—jazz musicians, classical musicians—that had played on this stage. We'd worked so hard to get to this point. Our parents were in the audience. Suddenly Brian starts hitting me. I open my eyes and people had stormed the stage. We were surrounded. The ushers didn't know what to do—they'd never dealt with this before. We had to go to the dressing room and they made an announcement. We were the last show before a renovation, so maybe that's why we got to play there. Almost like they didn't care if all the punk-rock people wrecked the place [*laughs*].

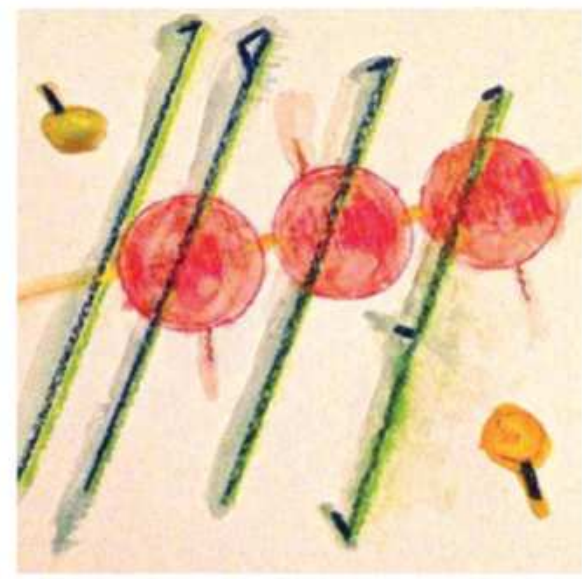
The Ramones was another gig that stands out. Just a club show, somewhere down south. I remember Brian and I went and knocked on their dressing-room door—we wanted to tell them how excited we were to play with them—and Joey answered. I'll never forget it; Joey turns and says, "Hey, you guys, look who's here. It's the Violent *Feems*!"

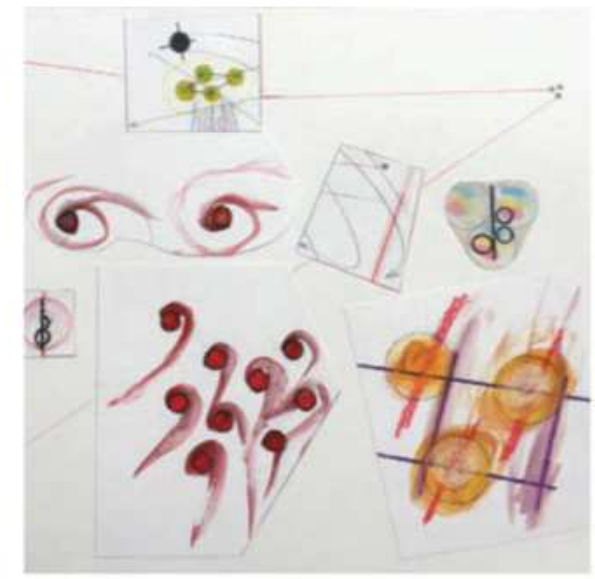
The last show I'd mention was the Grateful Dead. Jerry [Garcia] was still alive. The crowd was about the same size as Coachella. They set up this huge operation in the middle of nowhere in Ohio. I remember during sound check, there were air-conditioning ducts built into the floor of the stage, blowing cool air. We just played for a half hour or so, but I remember at one point looking stage-left and there was Jerry and Bob Weir, kind of nodding their heads, digging it a little.

After Coachella and a couple more reunion gigs, how come you didn't continue?

I love the music we made with the Femmes. I'm very proud of it. But at that time, 2013, the band didn't really have any new material and I'd embarked on this new adventure with Nineteen Thirteen. I'd played those Femmes songs thousands of times. With Nineteen Thirteen, playing with Janet, you never feel stuck in a situation where money and fame, or band interactions, are dictating anything. There's a great sense of freedom. I'm as excited as I've ever been musically. I've reacquired my taste for recording and producing. I love the challenge of using my

Some of DeLorenzo's recent artwork.





"I FIND I'VE BECOME A CREATURE OF REISSUE. IT'S EXCITING TO ME BOTH AS A FAN AND AS AN ENGINEER THAT SOME OF THIS STUFF IS NOT SIMPLY REMASTERED BUT REMIXED, AS IN THE CASE OF *SGT. PEPPER'S*."

drums to showcase Janet's instrument in different ways. Every time we get together there's a sense of discovery, of going into the unknown.

Janet uses a looping pedal with her amplified cello to build this hypnotic, layered sound, playing live over loops. Do you have a thumbnail to describe the band?

Janet likes to refer to it as "chamber rock." She brings her classical sense, and I bring my love of jazz drumming and my rock pedigree–weirdo rock, folk-punk, alternative rock, whatever you want to call my tenure with the Femmes. But I'm not sure if I have the sound pegged in my own mind–that's part of the fun. I'm always curious to hear what people say after they hear us. A lot of people say it fills their mind with cinematic images. Sometimes they tell us they like to close their eyes and let their mind flood with dreams as they listen. We like that. We're happy to encourage some kind of somnambulistic awareness!

Nineteen Thirteen has opened for the Avett Brothers, and Langhorne Slim. You're about to play with Jill Sobule. Any other memorable gigs recently?

We played with David J of Bauhaus and Love & Rockets down in Chicago. We opened and then backed him on 12 songs. We have plans to play together in the future. Here's a funny sidenote. When I was first talking to David, he said the Femmes were the biggest influence on Bauhaus. I said, "C'mon, David!" He said, "I'm dead serious. We loved the Femmes. The freedom involved, the fun, the lyrical content, the music, the darkness, all of it."

What's next for Nineteen Thirteen?

In mid-September, we release a new album, *Sci-Fi Romance*. It's got some keyboards; I sing on two songs. My daughters Kiko and Peri contribute vocals. Peri plays violin. Janet and I have plans to start some touring. We'd love to get to Europe. We really enjoy presenting our music live. We like watching the faces of people who have never heard us. They look at the stage and think, *Hmmm, a boy-girl act. A cello. Not even a full drum set. A little amplifier. Will this work? Is this gonna be boring?* But then we start playing, and people start smiling. Inevitably someone comes up to us after a gig and says, "I had no idea what you guys would sound like, but I liked it a lot."

What's a typical day for you like?

I don't have a bona fide routine, thank God. Every day is a little different. But I find as I get older I don't sleep as much. I love classic movies on TCM–sometimes I'll stay up until three or four in the morning, watching old movies, but I still get up at 8 A.M. Sometimes I'll just stay up all night. I'm always working on something, thinking about something. A musical thing I want to propose to Janet. An art piece–I've gotten back into painting. I create what I call water-collages, with watercolors and cut paper. One of them's on the back of the new album. I go on research binges. I get sidetracked into different things–recently I researched James Dean. Last month I had a Marilyn Monroe night–I went crazy learning about her life. Some of this is to further myself as an actor, which I want to get back into. I love private study. Remember when we had to go to a library or talk to someone to learn about something? In this day and age, so much is online. I try to take advantage of that.

What music are you listening to these days?

I find I've become a creature of reissue. It's exciting to me both as a fan and as an engineer that some of this stuff is not simply remastered but remixed, as in the case of *Sgt. Pepper's*. And, oh my God, the first album by The Band. We might get a remixed *White Album,* too. After my cousin, God bless him, introduced me to the Beatles when I was 16, I listened to almost only them for six years, in terms of rock. The Beatles and jazz. [*Points to a CD*] The new Coltrane. *The Lost Album*. I listen to all the jazzers, and I lean toward the outside, the free stuff. I have a brand-new turntable, too, so I'm falling back in love with my record collection. And starting a new collection.

Last question. You're a Packers fan. Excited about the season?

I look forward to every season. I love watching them play. Win or lose. But these days I watch other teams, too. I just love the game. I've come to appreciate the game. The strategy behind it, the stamina of the players, the stars. TCM and the Packers. Good pastimes.

Sci-Fi Romance, the new album by Nineteen Thirteen, is available at most digital outlets worldwide. Learn more about Victor DeLorenzo at victordelorenzo.weebly.com.

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LEONA, JUNE 2006

FORCE OF NATURE

As the great rock 'n' roll provocateur Courtney Love said in 1995, "You want to put it in me? I'm not a woman. I'm a force of nature. Your dick will fly right off!" Love was one part estrogen, two parts testosterone, and three parts terrifying. But that's part of her charm. Not every frontwoman has been as outspoken as Love, but back then she embodied the sexy rock-star ethos we all love and crave. You can't beat that kind of swagger.

JUSTINE JOLI, KELLE MARIE & PHOENIX RAY
January 2002

VERONICA GILLESPIE, November 1994

“RIGHTS OF SPRING”
March 1975

SHAY LAREN, June 2006

BRANDY O, March 1990

LEIGH ANDERSON
September 1994

CARTER CRUISE HAS A PLAN

MEET THE NORTH CAROLINA SORORITY SISTER TURNED PORN STAR/DJ.

BY MITCHELL SUNDERLAND

IN the summer of 2015, 24-year-old Carter Cruise summoned me to Los Angeles's Line Hotel. Sitting on an oval-shaped café couch, Carter was beaming. She had just won AVN's Award for Best New Starlet and Best Actress—a feat accomplished only by Jenna Jameson—and she'd recently hired a publicist.

In the hip, gentrified Koreatown neighborhood, Cruise's hoodie and dirty blonde hair contrasted with the straight bangs and acid-washed jeans of the girls around us—born-and-raised suburbanites who had sought refuge in L.A. Carter, too, was a migrant (in her case, from suburban North Carolina), but she had fled the South for sunny California to shoot porn, not to record acoustic ballads about cigarettes and coffee.

Carter, though, believed she fit in with the hotel hipsters. "I'm gonna slowly transition out of porn and become an EDM DJ," she said between sips of late-night coffee, using the acronym for electronic dance music. "You should write about it!"

I wavered, telling her I had heard this tale before: Girls who were going to transition from porn star to stand-up comedian, YouTuber, and/or feminist blogger. Porn, they all claimed, was "a stepping stone to launching a brand."

Within a few months, though, they were always back in front of their laptop's webcam, masturbating for cash. Carter assured me she was different—after all, she had revived the coed look while filming porn in college before Duke porn star Belle Knox went viral. I told Carter she was wrong.

But this time I was wrong, because three years later, I'm standing in the foyer of Carter's new home in southwest L.A., watching her prepare for her latest sold-out DJ tour—a first for the girl who starred in the porn series *Teens Love Huge Cocks*.

Wearing her hair in a bun, dressed in a rainbow shirt which reads KEEP AUSTIN WEIRD, Carter lugs in part of a huge delivery of water bottles. (Ravers need to keep hydrated.) "I nearly missed my delivery!" Carter says in a raspy voice reminiscent of Lindsay Lohan. As she picks up more bottles, her tucked-up hair reveals a "Call Me Daddy" tattoo on her neck. "It's not an issue unless I'm in line at Starbucks, hungover, and a family sees it," she says. "I get self-conscious. They must think, *Who is this ratchet girl in front of us?*" Then she giggles.

She laughs again as she recalls being on the road all year, DJing two to ten times a month. Whereas most porn stars attempting to go mainstream disavow their past, Carter has used hers to promote her gigs the way other porn stars use skin flicks to advertise their escort business. "I knew it was gonna be part of the spin," Carter says. Although she declines to reveal how much she gets paid per show, she says it's more than the $800 to $1,500 she makes for girl-on-girl porn shoots. This is because her bread and butter is DJing frat houses. Frat houses, she says, are the Venn diagram of porn and EDM. The boys equally love loud bass and bouncy boobs.

"I bring my boyfriend. We relive our college days," Carter says. "I see a photo of him between two girls flashing their boobs and say, 'So this is what you're doing while I am DJing!'"

FRAT HOUSES ARE THE VENN DIAGRAM OF PORN AND EDM. THE BOYS EQUALLY LOVE LOUD BASS AND BOUNCY BOOBS.

Most college dudes are polite, she says, even when inhibition levels are lowered after drinking copious amounts of beer from plastic cups. If one fraternity brother makes any sort of trouble, a fellow brother will typically have her back. Then there was the night Carter followed a group of them to an afterparty in a house unaffiliated with Greek life. One boy opened his bedroom door and yelled, "Slut! You're a fucking slut!" then slammed it shut. Carter knocked. Locked. She grabbed a broom, walked outside, and smashed his porch lights. The frat boys watched in shock. "Don't tell anyone," Carter told them.

"Nah, we won't," one replied.

"Greek life gets a bad rap, just like porn," Carter says. "But there are a lot of good people in it as well."

Carter sees intersections between porn and many parts of life. When I ask about her childhood, she recalls spending her days hiding in Barnes & Noble's sex section, flipping through books about the Kama Sutra.

"I was very sexual even as a child, very attuned with fantasies…. I always had fantasies of BDSM, very young, early on," Carter

PHOTOS BY GERALD DEBEHR

BECAUSE I FEEL LIKE IT

says. "I've been sexually inclined as long as I can remember—I knew it was something I shouldn't feel. So I kept it a secret.

"I have this theory: Because human sexuality is so repressed, a lot of our first sexual experiences [stem from activities] we are ashamed of—we masturbate, we experiment with a friend, we have a teacher fetish. Taboo things are fetishized because we are taught to fetishize shame. If you are with someone and you see someone else you want to have sex with, it's taboo. You repress this till you cheat. [Stepsister porn] is not about incest. It's that it's taboo, wrong, and dirty. That we should feel ashamed turns us on."

Carter's parents were middle-of-the-road. Dad worked in finance while Mom taught school, but many locals preached conservative values. "There's regular racism, sexism, and homophobia [in North Carolina]," Carter says. Her childhood sex obsession, she believes, was connected to her surroundings. North Carolina was an insular world of shopping malls and social traditionalism, but Carter believed she was bigger than her bubble, destined to accomplish something bolder.

Her parents sent her to theater classes, and she acted in community musicals. But just as she secretly fantasized alone in her bed at night, Carter dreamed of something beyond performing in local Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals.

"Take me to L.A.," she recalls saying to her parents one day. "I am going to be a child star."

"Sit down," her dad told her.

Craving thrills and prone to mood swings, Carter says she concluded that local theater was about as good as she could do in her town. She started telling herself that if she really wanted to head to Hollywood, no one could stop her, not even her dad.

Finances, though, proved to be an obstacle. After graduating from high school, she didn't have the money to chance a move out west. So she took out loans and enrolled in East Carolina University in 2009, determined to study theater.

During her freshman year, Carter decided to join a sorority. She wanted to make friends, but she also discovered that the idea of sorority initiation rituals triggered those childhood BDSM fantasies.

"I was into the whole idea of hazing," Carter says. "It's extreme, it's pushing your limits, it's proving you should be a part of something. From all the BDSM stuff I've [thought about], I am someone who loves extremes, pushing myself. I picked my sorority because I [heard] they had hazing."

At her entry ritual, though, her sisters declined to haze her. "What?" Carter responded. "I am ready to be hazed."

Joining the sorority, she became a regular on the Greek life circuit. If you went to frat parties in North Carolina during the second Obama administration, Carter says you probably knew her name.

But by junior year, she was bored with sorority life and began reading about sexuality on Tumblr. "I felt trapped," she says, alluding again to the traditionalism around her.

ONE DAY CARTER WATCHED AN ONLINE PORN MOVIE STARRING JESSIE ANDREWS, AND WAS CAPTIVATED BY ITS LUSH COLORS. *THIS IS SO BEAUTIFUL,* SHE THOUGHT. *I COULD DO THAT.*

Then one day, Carter watched an online porn movie starring Jessie Andrews, and was capitivated by its lush colors. *This is so beautiful,* she thought. *I could do that*. Between the artistic porn and feminist sex Tumblrs, Carter believed she was witnessing the start of the second sexual revolution.

"I wanted to be on the front of that wave," she says. She decided that if a young woman like her—a college girl raised in the suburbs—shot porn and was open about the experience, maybe it wouldn't seem as taboo to people.

Sitting in her sorority house, Carter drafted a ten-year plan: She would make porn movies, write about her adult career on a sex-positive Tumblr, transition into electronic dance music, and then move into mainstream acting.

When she called her parents to tell them her plan and explain why she was starting with porn, her father listened patiently, seeming to view his daughter's decision as another example of her need for excitement, for pushing her own boundaries—and those of others.

And so, Carter Cruise (a stage name) shot her first film. The distributor released it her senior year, and she became *the* hot topic in North Carolina Greek life. As she sauntered through frat parties, boys hit on her. She was the only porn star they knew, and she seemed dateable.

But not all the attention was positive. One Christmas Eve, Carter says a former sorority girl messaged her, "I hope your dad is [so] ashamed of what you do that he kills himself." Carter found the girl's in-laws on Facebook and sent them screenshots of the girl's messages. "You might not agree with my life choices, but the message she is sending is very negative," Carter remembers writing.

Experiences like this made Carter realize that porn—the foundation of her ten-year plan—could destabilize her future goals. She decided she wouldn't mention porn on her social media accounts, and it's still her online approach today. Look at her Instagram and you'll find Carter in millennial pink hats, Carter in black boots at Coachella, and Carter eating pizza. She could be any Instagram celebrity.

"Myself on my social media is different from my porn-star persona," she says. "I don't cam. I don't sext. I want people to understand when I go do porn, I am playing a character, like 'crazed slut who can't wait to suck cock today.' I don't want people to think they can treat me a certain way. I don't post sexual things. People aren't following me for free porn. I had the end goal in the beginning."

When Carter moved to Los Angeles in 2015, her plan went off-course. A porn production company refused to pay her, and she struggled to meet her $2,500 monthly rent. So she moved to a cheaper one-bedroom, a cute but "old and dusty" apartment on Sunset and Western in Hollywood. Carter fucked the same actors over and over again, and got bored. She decided to stop shooting boy/girl porn and move toward another phase of her plan: DJing. At first, she could only book one or two low-paying gigs a month. For a yearlong stretch, Carter says she only made around $25,000 and was forced to liquidate her porn-boosted savings.

Desperate for cash, she found herself crying on her apartment floor. *What have I done?* she thought. *I used to make more money*. She contemplated returning to boy/girl porn, or maybe taking up camming. Then she told herself, *No, I want this. I just have to keep DJing*. She hustled on.

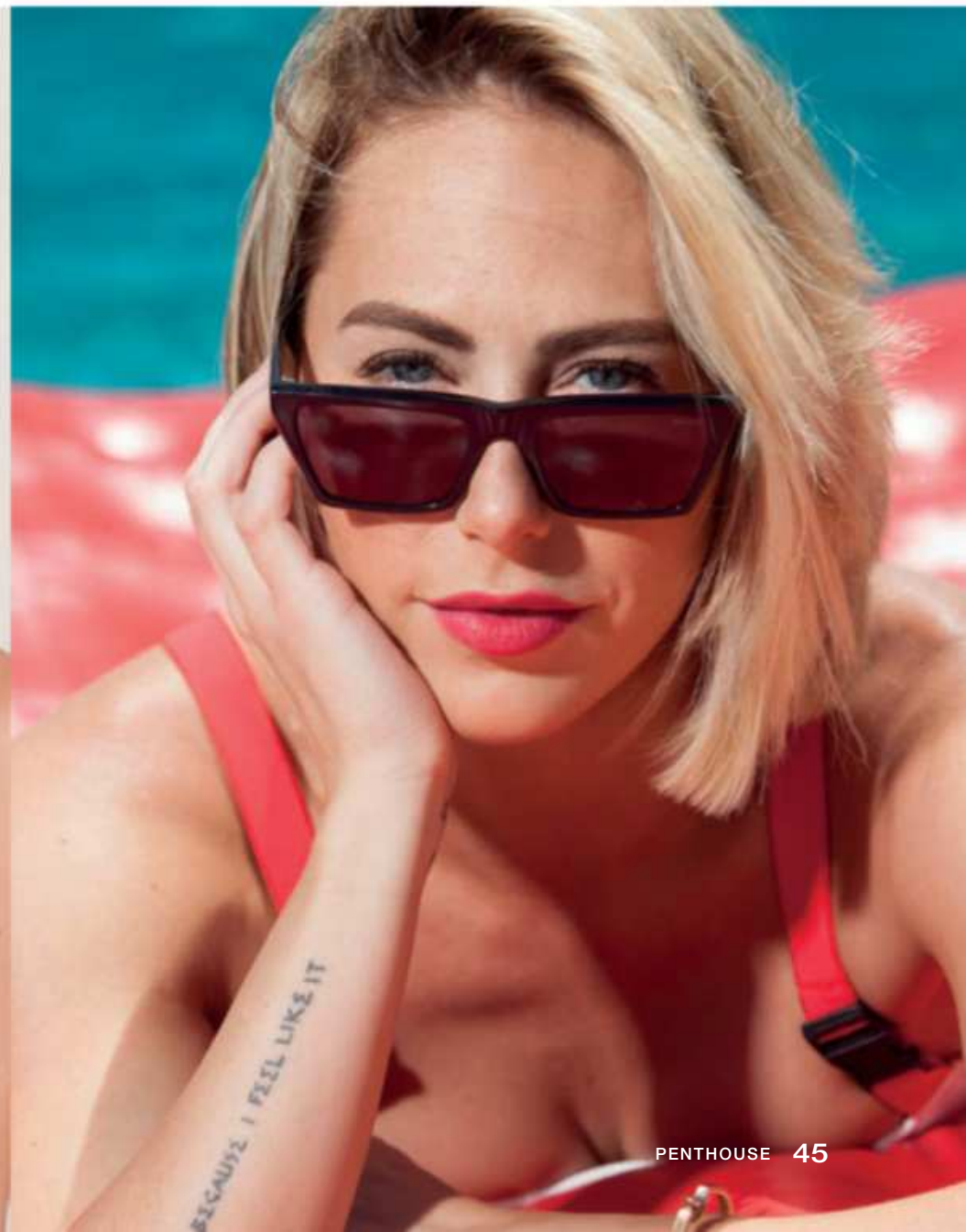
Two years ago, the tide turned. Squads of young fraternity brothers googling "porn star" and "frat" stumbled on Carter's 2014 interview with TotalFratMove.com (Gawker for Greek life devotees). The interview got widely circulated, creating a wave of new collegiate fans. More and more frat boys started emailing Carter, and she realized there was a lucrative DJ opportunity before her: frat parties.

"People like that I'm a regular chick," Carter says of her appeal. "That's why they liked me in the porn industry. You can meet me at a bar." She ruffles her shirt. "I don't have big tits. I come early to frats and stay late."

The frat parties bring in good money, too. Carter and her boyfriend now rent an expensive new house, sharing it with three fun-loving housemates. When I walk in, a few skull statues sit on an otherwise empty marble counter in the kitchen.

To support her lifestyle, she continues to shoot girl/girl scenes. Because just as porn can promote a performer's escort business, the work attracts young men to Carter's DJing. "Porn is a way to make fans," she says matter-of-factly. She knows some of the frat-party gigging could go away if her porn name vanished.

"Some girls try to deny they've ever done porn [when they



seek mainstream work]," Carter continues. "I don't want to name names, but they lose fans. I want to respect the adult industry. That's why I always speak up for sex-worker rights. I built a fan base that wanted these things." Thanks to the frat-party success, she now scores additional DJ gigs at clubs and raves.

But porn is still porn, reputation-wise. Recently, a promoter canceled a gig after he learned of Carter's porn background. Then there are those who label her as nothing more than another "model DJ"—a pretty girl who presses "play" on a laptop and pantomimes DJing, her name adding value to the event flyer. But given her first career choice, she's used to criticism, and shrugs it off. "After you shoot porn, you think, *Fuck it.*"

"PEOPLE LIKE THAT I'M A REGULAR CHICK. THAT'S WHY THEY LIKED ME IN THE PORN INDUSTRY. YOU CAN MEET ME AT A BAR."

Still, the stigma attached to porn rubs Carter the wrong way, because so many girls are flashing their tits and asses on Instagram, proudly declaring themselves "thots"—that ho over there—while critiquing porn stars.

"People reclaim 'thot' and 'slut,' but not 'porn star,'" she says. "I have friends who say they would never do porn, but they have private Snapchats where they post porn. I just saw a female DJ on social media talk about how she used to strip, but then she said, 'I would never do porn!'"

Hoping for a shift toward a new sexual revolution, Carter has instead watched porn get caught up in a new kind of culture war. She points to politicians who want to force porn stars to wear condoms, but then refuse to meet with sex workers.

"We need [their help]," she says. "People who are behind [these laws] are antiporn, antisex, people like Bernie Sanders or Kamala Harris, who support FOSTA [Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act]. The people behind that legislation are not behind sex workers at all. [Democratic senators] didn't talk to us. They think they are doing something good for people, but they don't know because they don't talk to people [in the industry]. How can you help someone if you haven't asked what they need?"

Believing this new, rising platform outside of porn work—her DJ touring—might chip away at the antiporn bias a bit, Carter has also started producing music while continuing to embrace her porn-star role. She's released remixes and some of her own songs, and spent the past year and a half writing and recording an EP called *Sin Music*.

"I'm not trying to be a singer," she says. "I just want a personal project. It wasn't about having a banger to play at shows. It was a passion project. I wanted to show I wasn't just a model DJ to put on a flyer. I spend so much time working on my sets, working to make each unique and special. Also, there's nothing wrong with model DJs. I have friends who are more model/Instagram types who play Sephora openings. That's dope! But that's not what I wanted to be. I want to have my own show. I want to have dancers. I want to have a whole visual thing. Model DJs don't get that."

Seated in her fine new home, plunging a spoon into a protein shake, Carter admits the ten-year plan she dreamed up in college hit a few bumps along the way. But she also knows she's beaten the porn odds.

"I could have a more comfortable life with a regular job, but this is the life I wanted," she says. "I didn't do porn, or start DJing, for money. I wanted to have a cool life with experiences. It's not the happy life you always see on social media. It's a struggle. They don't see me crying on the bathroom floor." Again, she laughs. Then she adds, "I'll take the lowest lows for the highest highs. That's just the part of the process."

Mitchell Sunderland was senior staff writer at VICE. He lives in Los Angeles, and his stories have been viewed by millions. He is at work on his debut nonfiction book, an investigation into the misunderstood pet industry, from a third-generation puppy person who was raised in the stockrooms of Florida pet stores and on the puppy farms of the Midwest.

HIGH VOLTAGE

METAL GOD MATT PIKE FROM SLEEP AND HIGH ON FIRE GETS AMPED TALKING TECHNOLOGY, FREEING THE MIND, SOCIETY'S "SPIRITUAL DOWNWARD SPIRAL," AND THE ONGOING LEGACY OF HIS TWO GREAT BANDS.

INTERVIEW BY ZACH SOKOL

PHOTO BY JEN ROSENSTEIN

THE musician Matt Pike shouldn't require an introduction. The world is a little fucked up, though—as he'll be the first to tell you—and the virtuosos who walk among us usually don't get their due until it's too late and they're already six feet under. Pike deserves better, and anyone who knows the difference between a blast-beat and break-beat would agree that the metal maestro should be a household name by now.

But for those who have never carved an anarchy symbol into a desk, Pike is essentially your favorite headbanger's favorite headbanger, a guitar guru if there ever was one. As a founding member of both Sleep and High on Fire, the 46-year-old has spent the last quarter-century eviscerating eardrums and unleashing riffs that have shaped the contours of contemporary metal. Without him, "stoner metal" wouldn't have a Wikipedia page, and thrash might never have had a twenty-first century renaissance.

Both Bay-area bands, despite their stark differences, have cultish followings, and the legacy surrounding their music has been passed from dorm room to dorm room, record shop to record shop, over the years, making Pike something like the Alejandro Jodorowsky of the fretboard. After all, taking a cue from the title of Jodorowsky's trippiest film, Sleep named its second album *Holy Mountain* (1992), and the creation story of *Dopesmoker*—the trio's infamous hour-long song/album about a cosmic caravan of "Weedians" sludging through a "riff-filled land" on the way to Nazareth—has developed the type of feverish mythology usually reserved for midnight movies or conversations about Elvis's current whereabouts.

Pike's most recent trip around the sun might elevate his status outside the metal underground, though. 2018 has seen Sleep awaken from a mighty hibernation with the release of *The Sciences,* the group's critically acclaimed fourth full-length and its first since *Dopesmoker*. (Naturally, the album dropped on 4/20, courtesy of Jack White's Third Man Records.) And this month, High on Fire will release *Electric Messiah,* the band's eighth LP and its best in years. Packed with the types of speed anthems that should soundtrack a bank robbery or coup, Pike believes the record has the potential to swell the group's audience to its rightful size. "This album's definitely got the material to do it," he told *Penthouse* over two long and epic interviews as he was wrapping a set of High on Fire shows in Las Vegas this past summer.

Sleep might be compared to Black Sabbath (if drowned in cough syrup), and, as frontman of High on Fire, Pike is regularly described as the American Lemmy Kilmister. But, in reality, the metal lord has carved his own path and sounds like nothing other than Matt Pike. If the guy doesn't receive some sort of monument during his lifetime, then maybe he's right that humanity is truly on a "spiritual downward spiral."

At the very least, we promise to make our children listen to *Dopesmoker*. This generation might not recognize him as a living guitar god, but the next will.

High on Fire, left to right: Jeff Matz, Matt Pike, Des Kensel

Hey Matt, how's Las Vegas treating ya?
I'm the mayor of fucking crazytown, so I'm busy as fuck.

Keeping up with your mayoral responsibilities. Are you partying?
Maybe just a little. It's more that I'm trying to schedule and manage everything…but I like to gamble, play games, and stuff like that. Plus, I'm with my girlfriend Alyssa Maucere, who I haven't seen in quite a while. We've been together for two and a half years, and live together [in Oregon]. She's kind of my life partner. She's amazing. She's not only a tattoo artist, a poster artist, and a musician, but her band Eight Bells is playing here on Sunday, so I'm staying in Vegas until the end of the weekend.

You must be touring at least ten months a year, right? And if Alyssa is also in a band, how often are you able to get together with her?
I've been making sure that I make time. We've been scheduling our relationship like we schedule our bands. If something great comes up for one of my bands, and I'm into it, yeah I'll take it. But I'm usually the first one to go, "No, I don't want to do that." These days, I try to allot time for my personal life because probably for the past ten years, I haven't allowed any of that time, and quite frankly that destroys my brain and it makes me hate everybody I'm around. It makes me hate music, it makes me hate everything. So I've got to take some time for myself. You have to learn how to say no. That's hard. I'm a pretty sweet person, so I have a hard time saying no to anyone. There needs to be boundaries, though, and don't forget I'm in two different, full-time fucking bands.

"MANKIND IS ON A SPIRITUAL DOWNWARD SPIRAL THAT HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR THE LAST 40 OR SO YEARS. I THINK ABOUT THE 1970S TO NOW, AND IT'S GOTTEN JUST DRAMATICALLY INTENSIFIED. IS HUMANITY GOING TO EXIST AND COEXIST IN THIS UNIVERSE, OR ARE WE JUST GONNA LET OURSELVES KEEP BURNING ON FIRE LIKE WE'RE DOING?"

You just finished touring with Sleep, and now you're on the road with High on Fire. What's that kind of transitioning like?
It's like juggling. It's hard to explain. I put 'ludes in Stove Top stuffing, and then I can play *Dopesmoker* after touring with High on Fire. Or you go from Sleep to High on Fire, and you pretty much put meth on spaghetti and meatballs [*laughs*]. I wish it were that easy! No, it takes a lot of like meditation and it takes a lot of focus, as well as knowing the material very thoroughly. I have rituals for both.

Tell me about them.
I have to breathe, I have to think about all the lyrics, or I have to think about all my parts and my solos. I just have to review everything. This is where I really do keep a sober mind, and I take it very seriously—my playing and how I perform with my brothers. I don't like to let people down, so I don't let people down!

Some rituals, though: I do pranas and I electrocute myself with these little electrodes, and I squeeze a hand thing. Pranas are the breathing and stretching exercises you do before yoga, but no one really practices those 'cause Westerners are too impatient to take any time. I also do some stretching, some push-ups, sit-ups, and like I said, I meditate and I think about the task at hand. For this part of my life, for the things when I have to perform and when I have to be at my best, I just try to be present—mentally aware of my consciousness and how I'm feeling about the amount of serotonin and dopamine in my brain. I practice a couple different types of meditation. I do a walking meditation, where I count my breaths. I have a breath meditation, too. Sometimes I'll listen to some frequencies, and then other times I'll just listen to *Dogman Encounters* and I get off on the terror that other people have, which sounds draconian, and perhaps it is, but at least I understand the dark side of what I want to call my "spirituality." Why not explore what might be considered dark?

You've had a busy year, with lots of touring. I'm curious what tour life is like for you today, compared to when you first started out.
Well, the rider has gotten better. Some of the travel's gotten better. And some of it's not better. I wish the guarantees were better, and I wish we could do more with the stage show. I wish we could do a lot. But we worked hard on this upcoming album, so High on Fire will be working on getting some traction and moving in a forward direction.

Sleep is doing way better than anybody ever thought it would [*laughs*]. For me, Al [Cisneros], and Jason [Roeder], we just go and jam, and then we think of even more fucked things to do as that band. It's been pretty good. It's been a good ride. We did all the blueprinting early on, and no one listened to Sleep. We were on tour with bands like Cannibal Corpse, Cathedral, and Hawkwind, and some weird bands [in the beginning]. It's like we were planting seeds, and now that seed has spread and it's become gigantic. That's a great thing. We're trying to strike while the iron is hot and the three of us continue getting together to write. It's a real band.

What are your writing sessions like today, compared to the 90s when the band was known to practice 12 hours a day while passing the smoking "chalice" nonstop?
I think me and Al just smoke some weed and work on ideas. And when it's me and Al and Jay, we work on drumbeats. I mean the whole concept of Sleep—what the music actually is—it's all about the drummer. It's just me and Al sprinkling things here and there when the drummer's playing and hitting notes at certain times. The whole playing technique to Sleep is to be listening to the drummer and hit on the right spot. Like, one note, then he plays 30 beats, then you hit another note. It's not always like that, but musically, the concept behind the band is rhythmic.

Sometimes, I throw shit at Al. But my job in High on Fire is definitely that I'm in charge of the themes and the lyrics. In Sleep, that's kind of Al's job. His singing and what we sing about are definitely mostly his concepts. I will throw ideas at his head now and then, but that's not my role in the band. My role is to make a rhythm section sound like it has a guitar player—and that he doesn't suck [*laughs*].

When you're coming up with the crazy conceptual ideas that inform High on Fire's music, what's that process like? Are you sitting down with a pad and paper at a bar? Are you hanging out at home and smoking a joint?
Well, it all depends. While I'm traveling, I might be in my bunk, just like trying to ignore the rest of the world. Sometimes I still do

hallucinogens. I'll take mushrooms or acid, and really just think about things. I do a lot of research on conspiracies and esoteric stuff—things that interest me, often historical things. I believe that history is fucking bullshit. Everything I've been taught since kindergarten is a lie and I believe that thoroughly.

I really don't share my mind all the way with everybody until I know that you're a person who might be open-minded enough. If I put all my ideas and interests out in public, they'd just put a tinfoil hat on me. CNN or FOX, or whatever news channel, or whoever puts the fucking tinfoil hat on whoever's head, doesn't realize they've been separated and that we are weaker when we're separated.

That's what the media is there to do, and I'm not that dumb. I don't share my thoughts or opinions anymore because I don't want to be mocked when I'm right. I don't give a fuck what anybody says, I am who I am, but I'll keep that shit to myself unless you're smart enough to read my lyrics and understand the metaphoric things I present within them. If you're smart enough to do that, you're probably of like mind. And if not, like I hope you enjoy the music anyway because it's just a metal record, dude.

That's one of the things I like most about your music. I can appreciate it on an aesthetic, head-banging level, or I can dig into it, learn about the esoteric shit, and appreciate the ideas you explore that a lot of people might call "fringe."

Most of them don't talk about this stuff because most of them don't believe it. They are all watching TV on their cell phones, and that's all they do. They don't fucking read anymore, unless it's on their fucking cell phone. They don't pay attention to anything unless it's Hillary Clinton or Trump. They don't fucking think. And if they do think, they're thinking about the next lollipop they can get with the next buck that they make. Mankind is on a spiritual downward spiral that has been going on for the last 40 or so years. I think about the 1970s to now, and it's gotten just dramatically intensified. Is humanity going to exist and coexist in this universe, or are we just gonna let ourselves keep burning on fire like we're doing? I don't mean to be like that...because we have a choice.

People are taught to be complacent or think the woes of society don't matter because they don't directly affect them. We're sort of conditioned to live in a delusion and accept it.

Yeah, that's what they taught you in school. Or the American Dream, whichever one you want to buy, whatever bullshit thing you're buying. There are a few things in the world that I fucking do love though, dude. I love fucking guitar. I'm sorry, but this is *Penthouse*—I really like butts [*laughs*]. I like yoga pants and bikinis. I like weed! I love my car, which is swampy because I haven't been home in months. It's a beautiful car, but it needs to be fucking cleaned. It's a '78 El Camino, but it's got a 383 Stroker and is 500-plus horsepower. It's fucking badass. It's not the year I would have chosen, but it had the motor in it, which is worth more than that fucking car. The car is beautiful, too. It has a perfect interior, great paint job. It took me a long time to earn. I bought myself something nice, after enduring all the times I've eaten shit for this job. But I love what I do.

I also like freedom of speech. What do *Penthouse* and Slayer have in common? The First Amendment. You can't fucking call hate speech on someone because they have an opinion! Fuck you if I don't like you and I want to say "fuck you." If I don't hurt you physically and I'm not a threat, you don't have the fucking right to tell me what to fucking say. That's what this whole new fucking fight is about. We have freedom of speech so people can talk their fucking bullshit. But it's like the vegan wearing leather. Don't talk your shit if you're not going to walk your walk. And I know why that generation is pissed off: It's because your parents were fucking yuppies and they suck. They're the reason that it's too expensive to afford a house. I'm not on the side of Trump, either. He's a distraction—that's what I believe.

So you're frustrated with both the left and the right. What about some modern political groups, like the Democratic Socialists of America?

I don't support socialism, but I agree with socialism sometimes. I mean, I love Scandinavia. Socialism is great there because if you're in a band, you get paid or even funded. I'd love to have something like that, or universal health care that doesn't fuck you. American health care fucked me.

I'm fucking pissed about that because I worked really hard to be who I am and do what I did. On top of digging ditches or driving a fucking tow truck, I went to band practice after work, and I slept like one day a week—for years! I'm not against a left person or a right person, I am against the fact that no one will take responsibility for themselves and they blame it on their personal fucking pocket Jesus...which is your cell phone or computer. Social media is the worst thing that ever happened to man, aside from the fact that once in a while someone tells the truth on it. But even then, it leads to them getting attacked and shut down.

To me, the best part of social media is that new audiences can get introduced to culture they might otherwise be unable to find. Like, there's a new generation of Sleep fans who probably found out about the band through the internet and social media. But yes, the vast amount of American culture's relationship with social media is fucking sinister.

I agree with that. I would like this interview to strike something in the hearts of all the left and all the right, and all the people who don't even want anything to do with all this shit. I'm telling you this is the point: They are separating us and it's the fucking TV, and this social media bullshit. Turn your fucking TV off and throw it in the hall. Turn your cell phone off and fucking make a friend without knowing if they support the left or right. Then there is no narrative. You're on neutral fucking ground. There's no fucking anarchy flags, no American flag, there's no flag they're flying anywhere. And when you get a grip on all that, then we're going to get somewhere. Then, shit, maybe Matt Pike for president?

Hell yeah. President Pike.

Yeah, well, I don't know if I'd ever want that job. The minute you get it, whether you did anything or not, they shut you down in one way or another. They point a finger at you out of a narrative...if one side likes you or the other, CNN or FOX will inevitably attack you. If I were president, I would just make everybody fucking meditate. I'm not a narcissist or egotist, this is just a hypothetical [*laughs*]. I do think if everyone shut off their electronics, they might know what north and south is. It's like fuck, dude….

What's your connection to Albert Pike? I know he was an infamous Freemason, but you told me to look him up.

It's horrifying, but yeah, as far as I've done research, I'm very much related to that guy.

Are you a Freemason?

Nope. I actually have been approached, and it's nothing against the Freemasons or anybody else. I'm a one-man gang, or my gang

consists of my crew and my bands. So I really don't need any sort of narrative. I don't need any sort of higher-up. I'm an anarchist that enjoys his gun rights, and that's who I am.

When you're digging through arcane history and looking up esoteric stuff, how do you find it? Are you looking online? Are you taking out books?

Sometimes it's from books. There are certain lectures I like, including ones from people like Michael Tsarion, even though I don't agree with everything he says. He's really well-read. David Icke turned me on to the Reptilians and all that kind of stuff. I think he turned a lot of people on to that. There's David Wilcock and *Ancient Aliens*. I've been to Peru, so I fucking know for a fact that mankind—some guy with a fucking knife made out of stone—didn't make the shit that's there. There were giants walking around, and I know that for a fact. And the same thing with the Sphinx. How come you can measure around the pyramid [in meters], and up and down it, and it is exactly the speed of light, 186,000 miles-per-second? Why is that? What is that sacred mathematics there?

If mankind is egotistical enough to think that we are the only ones who've ever been here, you're fucking fooling yourself. At the end of the day, really, we all should just be hunter-gatherers and go back to the fucking Dark Ages because we're being separated [*laughs*].

I'm not trying to get all conspiracy theorist, I just know that the world is full of fucking shit. I'm not saying this place is all bad. After all, I'm in *Penthouse,* and it's full of a lot of fun, a lot of good music, a lot of hot girls, a lot of cool people. You know, I love my fast car, I love my guns, I love my dog, I love my girlfriend. I love a lot of things about the world. If we try hard, it might not fucking fall apart. But it's not looking good because people just get dumber instead of smarter—and that's by design. That's what I'm saying. Fucking shoot your TV. I know cell phones are necessary, but.... They gave cell phones to everybody knowing humanity would become that much more stupid. It's by design, dude. If they turn off the electricity, now they have all the power. If they turn off the fucking electricity, I want to see how many fucking DIY people that want to be politically correct know which direction to walk to find fucking water. What will you do to start a fire, dude? I want to know what you're going to do when they take that all away from you.

"I LOVE MY FAST CAR, I LOVE MY GUNS, I LOVE MY DOG, I LOVE MY GIRLFRIEND. I LOVE A LOT OF THINGS ABOUT THE WORLD. IF WE TRY HARD, IT MIGHT NOT FUCKING FALL APART. BUT IT'S NOT LOOKING GOOD BECAUSE PEOPLE JUST GET DUMBER INSTEAD OF SMARTER.... THEY GAVE CELL PHONES TO EVERYBODY KNOWING HUMANITY WOULD BECOME THAT MUCH MORE STUPID. IT'S BY DESIGN, DUDE."

Society feels bleak right now. At the same time, you and I haven't jumped off a bridge yet. What could we do to change things? Are there any solutions to this bullshit?

Unfortunately, the only thing that teaches people who have fucking ego problems a lesson is consequences...and it's going to be too late. Finding things in spirituality like forgiveness, kindness, goodness can help. Instead of having an attack on someone's self-esteem, you build them up, and you try to make them see your point of view by being intelligent and by making choices that help humanity. Or you can be a selfish little prick and just go with a bunch of other selfish little pricks that really don't care if anybody's hurt or anybody feels any bit different about anything.

We've been taught to be a complacent, sad species. We are fucking sad. We are not the apex predator we were. Dude, I could take a hundred kids out of school and not one of them would know how to hunt or kill their own food. They will eat at fucking Burger King or McDonald's all day, but not one of them would know how to survive ten minutes. Me, personally, I'll be eating all your fucking legs and asses. I'm telling you, cannibalism is the way to the future [*laughs*]. That was a hypothetical, but the people who are going to survive are going to be cannibals. The people who are going to survive are going to be gangsters with all the guns that have pirate rules. But the New World Order is not the way to do this.

I know you're a gun enthusiast and always have been. I remember reading an old interview where you detailed your mighty collection at the time. Has it grown since?

Oh yeah. I just got a CZ Scorpion with the new laser sight. It's a nine-millimeter semiautomatic pistol, but kind of like an Uzi or submachine gun. I can make smiley faces on targets from like 60 yards. CZ is a great company. I have another Sub-2000 which is a Kel-Tec. I'm going to keep kind of quiet about the rest of my gun collection because if they come for 'em they're not going to know what to look for. I'll have a stash, somewhere.

So I have a Sleep question. From the beginning, the band had a big relationship with weed. Do you still smoke pot?

Actually, now that I live in Oregon and recreational marijuana is available, I'll smoke weed once in a while. Like, I did bong hits with Al while we were writing during the last little session working on *The Sciences*. I hadn't done a bong hit in like five years. We were in Albuquerque, and it's not like there's traffic, but I had a hard time getting from his house to my hotel right up the street. I was so high. Oh God, dude.

Now, I buy gummies. I guess I consume edibles more than I actually smoke. Every once in a while, we'll be in Europe or something, and my guitar tech and sound man, Chad Hartgrave, will get me to smoke so I go to bed and don't go out and fuck up and party and do all that stuff. He'll make me smoke a joint with him, even if it's just hash and tobacco. It knocks me out and makes me go to bed.

What are Sleep fans like today?

Multiplied [*laughs*]. I see a lot of younger people at our shows, and I think their parents were probably into us. I'm kind of an old dude. I'm 46—not even close to a millennial.

I'm obsessed with all the mythology around Sleep and the recording of *Dopesmoker*. I know you've said the rumor about the band spending its entire advance from London Records on weed is exaggerated. At the same time, the album was recorded in Mendocino, California, and you must have had access to great pot.

Dude, it's so different today. There used to be weed that had seeds in it. They don't do that anymore. Anyway, yes, we were in Northern California, which was definitely a great place to find some good fucking weed. That's where most of it was coming from. Hippies with guns were scary back then, though.

How much weed you were smoking during those recording sessions?

I don't know exactly, but we each had at least a pillowcase's worth at all times. We even made a fucking chalice out of the sink. We turned it into the biggest bong ever, using duct tape, some surgical tubes, and a kludgy mouthpiece we fired. We'd fill the sink with water and tape it off, so it was kind of like a gravity bong, but way fucking bigger. I think Al was the only one that actually got the thing to hit. I don't think anyone else had the lung power, but Al's got special DNA for shit like that.

Over the entire recording of *Dopesmoker,* how much pot do you think you consumed?

It was something like three to six ounces a day for two months. Yeah, it got to the point where I got so sick of just smoking it that instead I would just grind it up in a coffeemaker and throw it in spaghetti and make everybody eat that. Then we'd be, like, drooling, and you'd forget your name and address. It was a lot of weed [*laughs*].

Sleep released its long-awaited fourth album this year. Now that *The Sciences* is finally out, are you and Al still digging through the riff vault? What's the current status of the band?

Well, we're just treating Sleep how we treat Sleep. We're just trying to get together and write and have some fun with it and do some shows. We don't like to be too agenda-filled. We're pretty casual about it until we're done with something or have an album's worth of music ready.

I've always appreciated that you're in two very different bands, but both are so fucking good.

I appreciate it, too. It's apples and oranges. I'm glad I have both apples and oranges because I have two kinds of juice. And now High on Fire has a new album called *Electric Messiah*. We just released the eponymous single. The record is like an anarchy-Sumerian rock opera. I had a dream about Lemmy Kilmister after he died. People have told me I'm the American Lemmy, even before he passed, and it always bugged me. I can't touch that man. I used to tell people, "Dude, I am not fucking nowhere near Lemmy. I might have a raspy voice, and I might play similar music, and Motörhead is an influence on us, but I'm not fucking Lemmy Kilmister—no one is."

And I guess that's what the dream was essentially about: Lemmy got hella mad at me. Dude was pissed. In the dream, I felt guilty or that he would scold me or something. I had been writing a tune with Des [Kensel, drummer], and I started singing about the weird fucking dream. I ended up writing a bunch of lyrics that I thought Lemmy would sing, while approaching it like an homage to Lemmy. I got to go on tour with him, I got to interview him. I knew him a little. He was one of the biggest deals to rock and one of the last of his kind. So the single "Electric Messiah" is our ode because Jeff [Matz, bassist] and Des love him just as much as I did. I wasn't trying to jump all over a poser bandwagon or something. It's just a tribute to Lemmy, but it's a great album title as well, so we stuck with it. At one point, I wanted to call it *Insect Workout With Lemmy* [*laughs*], but Des convinced me to go with *Electric Messiah,* and we think it's badass.

Can you tell me about the album art for *Electric Messiah*?

Oh yes, Skinner did it! I've been friends with Skinner for a long time. We all have. He's an amazing dude. I met him quite a few years ago, at one of his art shows, and I was just blown away. For the album art, I talked to Skinner on the phone for a while, and told him what I was thinking about—the legend of the Nephilim and the Anunnaki giants waking up, after they've been cryogenically frozen under earth. The Nephilim are half-Anunnaki, and were supposedly the people who first created our civilizations.

Are they the ones who built Machu Picchu?

I believe so. They were spread out all over the Earth. So were the Pleiadians. If I go into that fucking thing, I'll be on the phone with you for another six hours. Anyway, the cover relates to the Nephilim giants, who used to be the kings of Earth, waking up from their underground tombs and usurping their thrones and slaying mankind. A lot of people have this hypothesis that that's going to happen.

Basically, I took all Sumerian cuneiform tablet stories and put themes from them into the first block of the new album, as if it were my own weird little book report. I'm very versed in this stuff. I study and research a lot of crazy shit like that.

So you're saying the album's lyrics reflect ideas related to this mythology, too?

Yeah, most of it. There are other [songs] about cryptids, and witches, and "God of the Godless" is about artificial intelligence. "Freebooters" is about Sir John Dee and England's colonization conspiracy with the pirates. The album is full of all the weird tales that I know.

But I'm not fucking telling you this *is* or this *isn't*. It's just shit I think about. What's more metal than half-fantasy, half-mythology? It all came from somewhere true. I sing about the Reptilians on occasion. I listen to a lot of people who they call "conspiracists," but dude, they have the best metal lyrics [inspiration-wise]. My personal beliefs, you can take or leave. I believe a lot of crazy shit. You know what's cool about this album? It's a fun album. It's not as doom-y [*laughs*].

Any other thoughts you want to add for *Penthouse* readers?

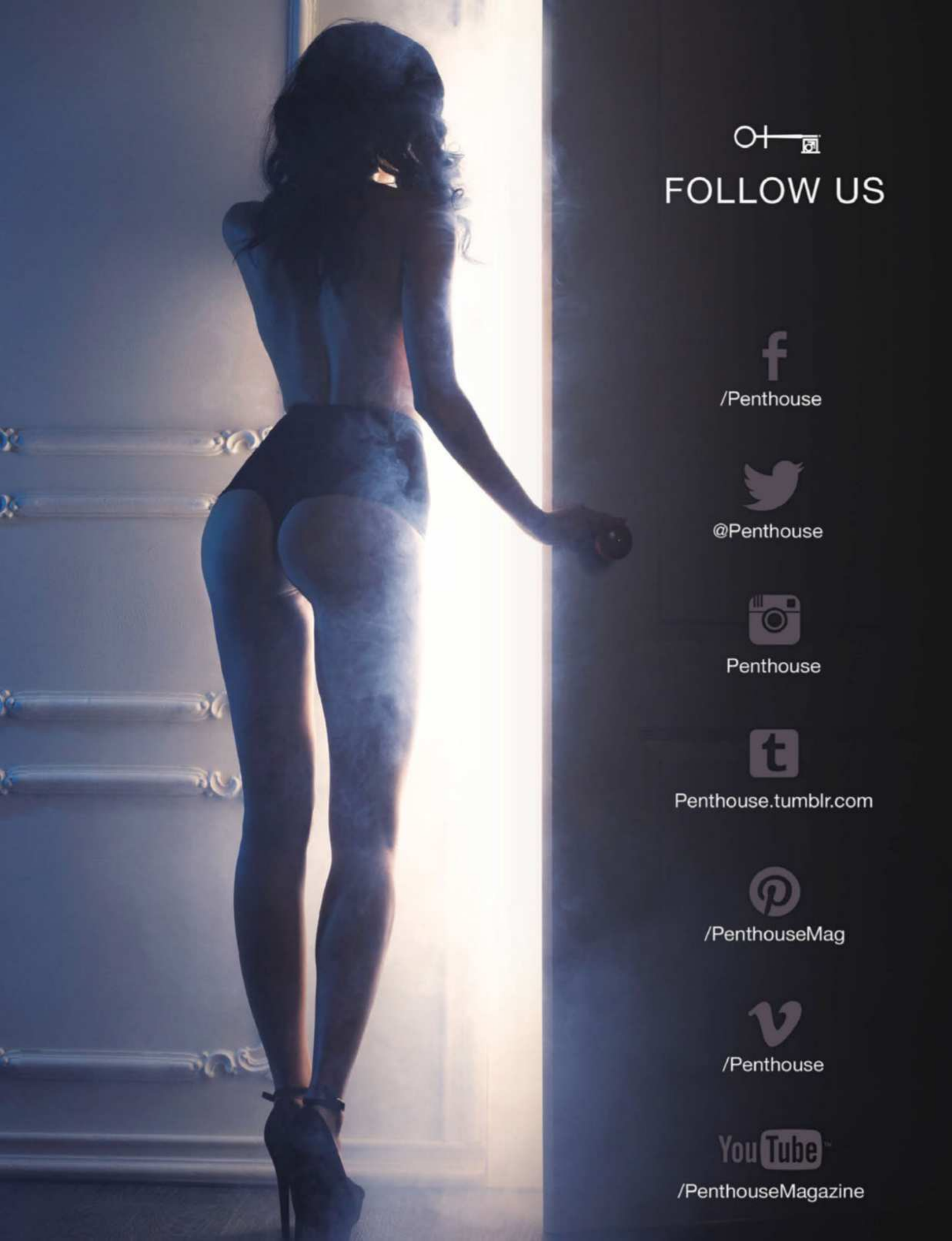
Yeah. Stop listening to the media and go to more fucking shows. Fucking seriously. Doomsday's coming too fast to not enjoy what you've got.

Zach Sokol is a writer and editor living in Brooklyn, New York. His writing has appeared in VICE, The Paris Review, Playboy, and Art in America, among other publications. He has also produced documentaries and curated art exhibitions, including a 2016 group show held in an empty U-Haul storefront in Manhattan.

HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLFE

We aren't sure if our October Pet of the Month Ivy Wolfe is a Duran Duran fan, but how could we resist? Besides, no one knows what that song is actually about. All we can guess is that it involves an insatiable protagonist who's stalking some babe like she's dinner. Hunt or be hunted, right? Ivy Wolfe does the former.

Photography: Alexandre Sartre
Hair & Makeup: Sahar Yakhi
Styling: Mish Barber-Way



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PENTHOUSE
IVY WOLFE
OCTOBER 2018 PET OF THE MONTH

PENTHOUSE

IVY WOLFE — OCTOBER 2018 PET OF THE MONTH

IVY WOLFE

Vital Stats:
32B-24-28
22 years old
5'4"

Hometown: Portland, Oregon

You used to dance in Portland. What drew you to the pole?
I was and always will be on a path toward sexual liberation, and liberation in general. I have always thought that strippers were so fucking ballsy. I wanted to be like that: comfortable with my sexuality, my body, and unafraid to dance so freely. So one day, I just went for it.

What was your go-to song to dance to?
"Porn Star Dancing" by Darkest Days. Ironically, of course.

Worst music to strip to?
"Barbie Girl" by Aqua, but I made that shit work.

Someone gives you $50K tomorrow, but you have to spend it in a week. What do you do?
I would invest the money and start my healing retreat in Ecuador. That's the dream.

What's the cheesiest line anyone has tried on you?
Honestly, I block out cheesy pickup lines. I really don't pay attention to them. My kind of guy is the guy who walks up and just tells me he thinks I'm beautiful and asks if he can buy me a drink.

This is the Music Issue. How much do you love music?
Music sets my soul on fire. I don't love music. I need music.

Best concert you've ever been to?
Billy fucking Idol!

Top five bands to soundtrack your life?
Joan Jett & the Blackhearts, Weezer, Fleetwood Mac, Christine and the Queens, and Gorillaz.

Fuck, Marry, Kill: Rockstar Edition. Go!
I'd fuck Prince, marry Stevie Nicks, and kill Milli Vanilli.

And lastly, is there such a thing as too many dicks?
Never!

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HUNGOVER WITH THE PRINCE OF INDIE POP

MAC DEMARCO INVITES US INTO HIS HOME.

BY MISH BARBER-WAY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERALD ACUNA

MAC DeMarco is hungover this afternoon. But this is the first time in a long, long time. The critically acclaimed indie pop star just wrapped up another tour with four sold-out shows in Los Angeles.

"There is a special kind of pressure with the hometown show with all the friends there," DeMarco sheepishly admits while he brushes his teeth. "Even though it was a big venue, I got nervous. The first show kind of went sideways. I vomited onstage, I pissed my pants, and I burned some cigarettes on my chest and my tongue. I've never done that before."

To anyone who has followed DeMarco's career from the beginning, this kind of show is par for the course. Back in the day, when he was infamous but not yet famous, he was known for summoning the spirit of one-man freak show G. G. Allin, once even allegedly swinging from the ceiling with a drumstick up his ass.

Now, domesticity has struck the 28-year-old musician, who just bought a house in L.A., a total fixer-upper that was inhabited by an eccentric gay couple who left an epic collection of porn in the dilapidated basement. Contractors got to work on the house right away, transforming the mess into the adorable white and

THEN COME ON GIVE THIS LOVER BOY A TRY/ I'LL PUT THE SPARKLE RIGHT BACK IN YOUR EYES/ WHAT COULD YOU LOSE?

—"NO OTHER HEART," 2015

blue bungalow we're sitting in today. "We painted it like a Greek restaurant," he says as he shows us around. "Too bad I'm not a Greek guy."

After almost a decade of top-selling albums, wild, sweaty shows, and headlining huge festivals such as the Pitchfork Music Festival, Coachella, Fuji Rock in Japan, and performing on *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert,* ABC's *Charlie Rose,* and at Radio City Music Hall, he's taking a quick breather, settling into life with his girlfriend and their new home. Even more recently, DeMarco departed from his long-time label, Captured Tracks, to start his own enterprise, Mac's Record Label.

Though he seems like an eccentric goofball in person, DeMarco's music is a radical combination of Morrissey's emotive melodies with the quirky comedy of Jonathan Richman and a pinch of yacht rock. On his earlier albums, he wrote catchy romantic songs about the

ALWAYS FEELING TIRED, SMILING WHEN REQUIRED/ WRITE ANOTHER YEAR OFF AND KINDLY RESIGN.

—"SALAD DAYS," 2014

YOU'VE ALWAYS FELT IT'S HARD TO VOICE COMPLAINTS/ BUT WHAT YOU VOICE IS WHAT WILL DRIVE YOUR FATE. —"BABY YOU'RE OUT," 2017

LOOK HOW OLD AND COLD AND TIRED AND LONELY HE'S BECOME/ NOT UNTIL YOU SEE/ THERE'S A PRICE TAG HANGING OFF OF HAVING ALL THAT FUN.

—"MY OLD MAN," 2017

things he loves, like his long-term girlfriend, blue jeans, and Viceroy cigarettes. But in recent years, he's explored deeper emotional territory, even penning an entire album about growing up poor in rural Canada with his (now estranged) drug-addled father. His fans are obsessive and look to the hoser like he's a god. And he kind of is. After all, no one plays guitar like DeMarco. He championed a new genre of indie rock for millennials.

Only eight years ago, DeMarco was sleeping next to a water heater in the closet of a punk house in Vancouver, British Columbia. Now he can sell out the Hollywood Palladium in five minutes and has more money in the bank than he ever dreamed of. But that doesn't mean DeMarco is spending recklessly. In fact, he still drives an old Volvo and wears his undies until they disintegrate.

That's showbiz, baby.

MAC'S
RECORD
LABEL

Our readers' exotic sexcapades brought to life...

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HEATHER BENJAMIN:

ART GODDESS OF THE EROTIC-GROTESQUE

HEATHER Benjamin is a master at drawing vaginas. Whether exposed and flush with pleasure, obscured by thickets of pubic hair, or leaking menstrual blood, the 28-year-old explores that charged part of the female body in all its gore and glory when it comes to art.

Early on, the New Jersey native used old copies of *Penthouse* and *Playboy,* as well as vintage nude photos culled from flea markets and thrift shops, as raw material for her illustrations. The erotica helped power the many art zines she released. In "Sad Sex," put out in 2008 when she was a student at the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design, nearly all the images were informed by her mighty collection of print porn. But while many of the women depicted posed with the alluring swagger of pinup models, their facial expressions or actions were anything but centerfold-friendly.

One work featured a woman spreading her pussy lips with one hand, the other reaching toward the viewer in agony. Her eyes are scratched-out, her mouth is agape in horror, but she sits beside the words "YOU MAKE ME FEEL SPECIAL," the capital letters dripping blood.

From the start, Benjamin's work has included images of women mutilating their nipples, threatening their labia with scissors, or flexing in ecstasy as insects swarm their limbs. Imagine the deviant, DGAF attitude of an R. Crumb comic, fused with Leonor Fini's surrealist explorations of femininity, and you're getting somewhere close to a Benjamin artwork.

Yet despite the carnal carnage she regularly depicts, a sensuality and agency emanates from her characters, especially because they usually appear alone. This tension is not unlike the ambivalence most of us feel about our own bodies—that vacillation between love and loathing of our flesh. It's a duality that fuels Benjamin's practice, and she's able to translate this abstract, almost ineffable experience into something both visceral and vivid.

"Looking back, I feel like 'Sad Sex' was a metaphor for my extreme confusion and self-hate and depression at that time, which was manifesting in a very teenage way, because I *was* a teenager. In order to express it, I was resorting to extremes [in my work] because I felt so extreme," Benjamin says. She's quick to point out that she still has a "dichotomous relationship with my body and other people's bodies—this really extreme fluctuation between perceiving beauty and experiencing lust, and then alternatively experiencing disgust and repulsion."

Since "Sad Sex," Benjamin has self-released numerous other zines (most of which sold out), participated in dozens of art exhibitions, and become something of a cult figure within the East Coast punk scene, with her illustrations adorning countless DIY gig posters.

In 2011, the Vancouver band White Lung (fronted by *Penthouse* editor Mish Barber-Way) posted flyers featuring Benjamin's ink drawing of a woman pulling out her hair, veins bulging on her hands. Scrawled in the corner of the illustration are the woman's stream-of-consciousness thoughts, including the line, "My God.... I cause my own suffering through my desire to think of myself as a being of value and permanence."

In other words, Benjamin's work continues to explore many of her early themes. "I'll probably be wrestling with them for the rest of my life," the artist says.

But since her student work, Benjamin has honed her voice and technical skills, and expanded her visual language to the degree. This development is captured in the new book *Cavegirl Monologue,* which she describes as an anthology of work from the past five-plus years. "I really tried to organize it in a way so it wasn't perceived as a retrospective, but rather a collection of my work from a specific period," she says.

Released by the Brooklyn record label and art-book publisher Sacred Bones (they've issued music by David Lynch, Pharmakon, and Zola Jesus, and books by illustrator Alexander Heir), *Cavegirl Monologue* compiles 150 pages of Benjamin's drawings and paintings in full color. The hardcover showcase—and the cachet of the publisher—means Benjamin's art, by turns arousing and grotesque, titillating and disturbing, will find even more fans.

Yet even as this book is being published, its creator speaks of transitioning into a new season of her practice and life. With a breakup in her recent past, and having made a decision to return to New York City after several years in Providence, Rhode Island, she's feeling reinvigorated, and says this energy is apparent in the text's newest images. As Benjamin puts it, this work expresses "growth and exploration and sensuality, because that has so much to do with my experience of reconnecting with myself."

Since sending *Monologue* to the printer, Benjamin has been attending artist residencies, curating group exhibitions, and focusing more on larger-scale paintings. She describes her latest work as "looser," less "cerebral." That said, she's not done drawing clitorises and bodily fluid in her signature, Janus-faced style—erotic, disquieting, and incendiary, all at once.

Asked how she hopes her work will be received, Benjamin says she'd like it to resonate with anyone who can "identify with aspects of my own experience of womanhood and sexuality, especially the darker stuff." The boundary-pushing artist continues: "I'm trying to create something beautiful and stimulating out of pain and trauma—that's my ultimate catharsis. When it works, and people can relate to it, that's the biggest high for me."

IRON MAIDEN

Nothing is more awkward than seeing a model hold a guitar like it's a cactus. (It's almost as unnatural as when Beyoncé smoked in one of her music videos.) But our October CyberCutie Hopeless SoFrantic taught guitar for six years and is a master. So, we decided to surround her with her favorite instrument and let her riff.

Photography: JT III
Hair, Makeup & Wardrobe: Teri Groves

Ibanez

Ibanez

HOPELESS SOFRANTIC

Vital Stats:

32F-22-34

22 years old

5'3"

You and your mechanic live in an adorable bus that you turned into a mobile home. How is life on the road?

Aw, thank you. I'm very proud of our tiny-home! This trip has been such a huge adventure. When people think about traveling, they typically think about traveling abroad. However, this country has such a variety of landscapes. U.S. topography ranges from canyons to geysers to cities to caves to plains. Within two months, I've been able to explore them all.

What's the name of your bus? Big Titty...something?

Bertha! Big Titty Bertha!

That's right! Why did you name her that?

Well, my mechanic and I were originally deciding between two buses. The more expensive bus was called "Big Titty Bertha" because I cat-called her when I saw her, and the more realistically priced bus was named "More Realistically Priced Bertha." They were $1,500 apart in cost, but the salesman was super sweet and dropped the price of Big Titty Bertha to match the price of its more affordable competition. The rest is history.

Out of everywhere you've traveled in the U.S., where do you feel the calmest?

Zion National Park, hands down. Zion gave me everything I wanted: the views, the hiking, the vegetation, the wildlife, and all without the tourists. Definitely reserve a permit to do the Subway canyon hike at least once in your life.

Which is the most underrated state in America?

Utah! The state has such diverse wildlife and terrain. In Salt Lake, you're able to enjoy the perks of city living while encircled by mountains. It was quite a sight watching Fourth of July fireworks shimmer over the peaks of the Wasatch Range.

What about the most overrated state?

Nevada for sure. The National Atomic Testing Museum and Erotic Heritage Museum were the only really interesting things in Vegas. I don't gamble or drink, so I didn't expect Vegas to be my kind of place anyways. Outside the city are just dead, sandy plains roasting in 110-degree barrenness.

Tell us about all the rad features you and your mechanic installed in your mobile home.

Luckily, the two of us have a background in home renovation, which came in handy constructing the bus. We've installed a 200-watt solar-panel system, running water, a bypass from the alternator to the house battery, and new flooring, while also having more homey features like a dining nook, a functional kitchen, closet space, and a full-size bed.

How many miles have you clocked so far?

7,000 miles so far! And things are just getting started!

Lastly, what's on your road-trip soundtrack?

I want to say something like the Red Hot Chili Peppers' Greatest Hits, but my dog barking at squirrels is probably more accurate.

Find more of Hopeless SoFrantic at share.myfreecams.com/HopelessMFC or see more at Penthouse.com

FUCK LIKE A MAN

BY JENNY NORDBAK

MY fingers are gripping her hips so hard as I pound my strap-on into her from behind, I know she'll be bruised tomorrow. She'll love it. Tomorrow, I'll gently kiss the marks I've made on her porcelain skin—not necessarily apologizing, but rather celebrating the evidence of our lust. But that's tomorrow.

For tonight, I get to unleash that barely civilized part of me that I normally have to restrain. As a woman, I'm not supposed to have this side. I'm supposed to be nurturing and soft. I don't give a fuck. Tonight, I want to be rough and masculine, refusing to feel guilty for taking exactly what I want.

I'm in full drag, dressed as a man in a power suit. We've been role-playing all night, letting me tap into that male side of myself that usually gets smothered. I love being a woman, but sometimes I just want to fuck someone.

I pull out and grab her by the hair to turn her around. Before she has time to protest, I slap her cheek lightly to make her open her mouth. I press my dick between her lips and slide it all the way into her throat. It turns me on that she can taste herself on the silicone dildo.

If I was being polite, I would stop there, but I'm not. I feel the resistance of her throat and keep pushing, imagining what it would feel like to have it squeezing tightly around me. It's in moments like this that I feel penis envy most keenly.

She's gagging now but doesn't try to fight me. She can't breathe once my dick blocks her airway, but she wants to please me more than she wants oxygen. I hold her there for an instant longer, feeling her start to panic before I release her hair and let her collapse panting to the ground. Her makeup is smeared where her eyes have been streaming tears. Snot and drool cover her chin—and all of this simply makes her more attractive to me. Raw sex is messy. If that makes you uncomfortable, you're missing the best parts.

I push her down on her back and she instinctively raises her legs in the air, offering herself to me. She's hardly a victim of my lust. She wants to be used—to be treated like an object.

I attach her ankles to a spreader bar and push them above her head. Her hands are still free, but she's vulnerable and exposed. Her holes are open to me.

I start fucking her pussy again, and she slides a hand down to rub her clit. I allow it. I want to use her, but I don't care if she gets off in the process.

She's moaning loudly, but when she gets quiet and starts to hold her breath, I know she's getting close to coming. I watch in delight as her pussy spasms rhythmically around my cock.

She's still trying to catch her breath from her first orgasm when I reach for the wooden clothespins on the table behind me. I clip one on each nipple as she resumes rubbing her clit in tight little circles. She hates it when anyone is gentle with her nipples. Licking and kissing them make her squirm with irritation. She prefers it rough.

She's getting close again, so I pinch the wooden clamps together even harder and she comes, this time screaming in a mixture of pleasure and pain. That line is what I live for, the heady mix of those feelings that overpowers everything else. I keep fucking her, knowing that since she's already gotten off multiple times it won't take much for her to keep reaching that peak.

I slide my hand into my strap-on harness and start rubbing my clit, too. I'm on the edge of an orgasm but need something more to get me there.

I pull the clothespins off her nipples and squeeze them roughly as the blood returns, making them throb. She whines and shakes her head, squeezing her eyes shut.

She's letting me hurt her because she likes it, and that is just what I need to get off.

I release her ankles from the bar, and she scrambles to get to me. We kiss frantically, molding our bodies together. I love the feel of her wet tongue against mine.

I take a moment to savor how soft she is before pushing her head down again.

"Clean me up," I command.

She takes my dick in her mouth again, licking her own moisture off it. It's a tease because I can't really feel it but want to. When it's all clean, she carefully removes the harness and begins to lick my clit, gently at first and then harder.

I'm not pretending to be a man anymore, but I haven't surrendered that dominant part of myself, either. When she finds the exact spot where I want her, I hold her head in place and grind against her mouth, taking the pleasure she's offering.

When I've come down from the orgasm, I slide my tie off and loop it around her neck. I stand up, but she stays on her knees and lets me pull her to the bedroom by the collar she's now wearing. She's my pet and I'm not finished with her yet.

Jenny Nordbak is a retired dominatrix and author of The Scarlett Letters: My Secret Year of Men in an L.A. Dungeon.

I PUSH HER DOWN AND SHE RAISES HER LEGS, OFFERING HERSELF TO ME. SHE'S HARDLY A VICTIM OF MY LUST. SHE WANTS TO BE USED—TO BE TREATED LIKE AN OBJECT.

BRAND-NEW BOOZE

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / BY ANNA_PUSTYNNIKOVA

Four Pillars Bloody Shiraz Gin, Mr. Black Cold Brew Coffee Liqueur, and Código 1530 Rosa Tequila don't have much in common other than they were all sent to our office in the same box and are all equally lip-smacking delicious. Who knew that a gin and wine hybrid could be so good? The Four Pillars Bloody Shiraz is naturally sweetened gin with floral bursts from Shiraz grapes, while the Código tequila is aged in uncharred Rosa oak barrels (that's code for "fancy as fuck"), melding tequila and Cabernet together. We know all this mixing can feel a bit like messing with the Jungle Juice you made as a teenager from your parents' liquor cabinet, but these hybrids are curated and pretty incredible. That shit you drank with your buddies was just plain nasty.

1

2

3

I. BLOODY JASMINE
Ingredients:
¾ oz. Four Pillars Bloody Shiraz Gin
¾ oz. Campari
¾ oz. dry curaçao
¾ oz. fresh lemon juice
dash of Regan's Orange Bitters
fresh lemon twist (for garnish)
Add ingredients into a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake and strain into a chilled glass and garnish with a lemon twist.

II. MR. BLACK COFFEE NEGRONI
Ingredients:
⅔ oz. Mr. Black Cold Brew Coffee Liqueur
⅔ oz. dry gin
¼ oz. sweet vermouth
¼ oz. Campari
Add ingredients into a cocktail shaker. Stir and pour into a rocks glass over ice.

III. THE VELA
Ingredients:
1½ oz. Código 1530 Rosa Tequila
¼ oz. lime juice
¾ oz. pink grapefruit juice
¾ oz. rosemary simple syrup
4 medium watermelon cubes
1 slice Fresno chili pepper
Muddle watermelon and Fresno chili pepper. Add tequila, rosemary syrup, grapefruit juice, and lime juice. Shake well. Garnish with a sprig of rosemary.

IV. SPICY PINK WATERMELON MARGARITA
Ingredients:
2 ozs. Código 1530 Rosa Tequila
3 ozs. watermelon lime jalapeño juice
¾ oz. fresh lime juice
¼ tsp. jalapeño-infused agave nectar
fresh jalapeño, sliced (optional)
kosher salt (for garnish)
Fill a cocktail shaker with ice. Add the watermelon jalapeño juice, tequila, lime juice, and agave nectar. Shake for 30 seconds and pour into a rocks glass. Salt glass rim and garnish with jalapeño slices.

MUSICAL JOCKS

SPORTS STARS WHO BRING THE TUNES.

BY PHIL HANRAHAN

ONE afternoon in July 1995, pitcher Jack McDowell gave the finger to his own fans at Yankee Stadium. McDowell was a great hurler—the 1993 American League Cy Young Award winner and a three-time All Star—but he just didn't have it on this day and got rocked for nine runs and 13 hits in four and 2/3 innings. As he left the mound after getting pulled, Black Jack—nicknamed for his gunslinger stare, the black look he gave hitters—got lustily booed. Feisty as ever, the tall, goateed McDowell raised his pitching arm and gave the crowd a one-finger salute. Then he twirled his hand around for good measure.

JACK ASS shouted the *Daily News*. THE YANKEE FLIPPER blared the *New York Post*. Later we learned music had something to do with McDowell's poor performance. He'd been drinking into the wee hours with two music buddies, Mike Mills and Scott McCaughey of R.E.M.

A musician himself, Black Jack was friends with a number of rockers, including guys in the Smithereens and Pearl Jam singer Eddie Vedder. In fact, two years earlier he'd been partying with Vedder in New Orleans and got knocked out by a bouncer during an altercation. Vedder was arrested for public drunkenness and disturbing the peace. Black Jack walked away with a black eye.

I'll always associate those 1995 Yankees with music. I had just moved to New York City and it seemed like every other day there was a print, radio, or TV story about the chops of both McDowell and centerfielder Bernie Williams, a classically trained guitarist.

By this point, Black Jack had toured with the Smithereens, and had a new band, stickfigure, whose first album, *Just A Thought,* compiled memorable songs in a jangly, alternative-rock vein, written and sung by Black Jack. The band would go on to release three more solid albums, with bass from Mike Mesaros of the Smithereens and drums from Frank Funaro and later Josh Freese. (Funaro left to drum for Cracker; Freese had earlier drummed for Paul Westerberg of the Replacements.) As for Williams, who led the Yanks in hits, runs, and total bases that year, and batted .429 in the playoffs, he wasn't trying to put out records at the time, but it was clear he kept up his skills. I watched him strum a couple Latin-inflected tunes during a local-news segment and thought, *Damn, Bernie can play.*

One of the greatest Yankees to ever don pinstripes, owner of four World Series rings, his No. 51 officially retired, Williams went at music hard as the new century began. Playing and composing songs in different styles (jazz, Latin, classical, pop), he released a pair of major-label albums, both of them cracking the U.S. jazz charts top-five. These records included collaborations with Bruce Springsteen, Rubén Blades, banjo wizard Béla Fleck, and other greats. After leaving professional baseball in 2006, Williams studied guitar and composition at a state university, and just a couple years ago received a bachelor's degree from the prestigious Manhattan School of Music.

Black Jack and Bernie—two of the most legit music-making sports stars we've ever seen. But who's their competition? Who else has excelled as a professional athlete while also achieving musical excellence, as opposed to mere novelty-act notoriety?

I did some digging. I did some downloading. I listened to champion boxers Manny Pacquiao and Grammy nominee Oscar De La Hoya sing. I listened to tennis legend John McEnroe shred. I listened to Hall of Fame catcher Mike Piazza play drums and contribute "death growls," as the liner notes put it, to a metal album by Black Label Society. I watched clips from Woodjock, a charity event organized by pitcher Jake Peavy where ballplayers get on a stage during spring training in Arizona and play music before Cactus League fans.

I watched Peavy do a fine cover of the Amos Lee song "Learned A Lot." I discovered that former All-Pro offensive lineman Kyle Turley moved to Nashville and put out an album of "power country" songs. He shows off his pipes on a tune called "Another Whiskey." I was impressed with the singing of retired All-Star shortstops Omar Vizquel and Ozzie Smith. Vizquel covers a Goo Goo Dolls song and Smith pulls off a goosebump-inducing (seriously) rendition of a Sam Cooke R&B classic, "Cupid," on a record featuring warbling ballplayers titled *Oh Say Can You Sing?*

And then there's retired pitcher Barry Zito. Last year he became the first former Cy Young Award winner to hit the Billboard charts when his self-released EP *No Secrets* briefly appeared on the Country and Americana/Folk top-40 lists. Zito's been singing and playing guitar since 1999, and hopes to do more charting in the future.

But he doesn't chart on my own totally subjective, no doubt faulty top-5 list!

Along with Bernie and Black Jack, these former ballers bring it, musically.

MIKE REID, a Pro Bowl defensive lineman for the Cincinnati Bengals in the 1970s, went on to forge a big-time music career, writing more than 30 top-ten country and pop hits, including two Grammy-winning songs for Ronnie Milsap, and Bonnie Raitt's "I Can't Make You Love Me." "Walk On Faith," a single from his own 1990 debut album, climbed to No.1 on the Billboard Hot Country chart. Reid's the only human in history to be inducted into both the College Football Hall of Fame and Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame.

WAYMAN TISDALE, the late, great power forward from Oklahoma, a 1984 Olympian, retired in 1997 after a sterling NBA career to focus on music, his first love. A gifted soft-jazz bassist, Tisdale would put out eight albums before his death in 2009, with his 2001 album *Face to Face* climbing to the top of the Billboard contemporary jazz chart.

TIM FLANNERY, a San Diego Padres infielder for a decade (his best season at the plate was 1985, when he hit .281), spent seven years as third-base coach for the San Francisco Giants, and has World Series rings from 2010, 2012, and 2014. Okay, so he wasn't an MLB superstar, but he's a great singer-songwriter, and a fine guitarist. A bluegrass ace, he's put out a dozen albums and played with Jackson Browne.

ALEXI LALAS, the flame-haired Olympic and pro-soccer player turned commentator also points to music as his first love. In the late nineties, he sang and played guitar in a band, Gypsies, that toured Europe with Hootie and the Blowfish. Since then, the always-vocal Lalas has released three solo albums of tuneful rock 'n' roll, the last in 2014.

SHAQUILLE O'NEAL and his rapping might seem to fit the description of a novelty act, but I vote legit. The Big Aristotle—league MVP in 2000, four-time world champion, 15x All-Star—has a way with words, as we know. And as an MC his low-voiced, mid-tempo flow makes for enjoyable listening. Check out his work with Phife Dawg on "Where Ya At?" Wait, you're not buying it? Okay, how about this? He's a better rapper than point guard Tony Parker.

Moreover, you can't take this away from Shaq: His 1993 debut album, *Shaq Diesel,* went platinum. Boom.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / BY RON ADAR

HOT LINES

HOLLYWOOD SHOULD STEP ASIDE FROM THE #METOO MOVEMENT.

BY LEAH MCSWEENEY

WHY must this current wave of so-called feminism operate on the idea that all men are sexual predators and women are always the victims, and that all women must believe the word of every other woman as if it's gospel? I mean, how fucking problematic is #BelieveAllWomen? Who came up with this ridiculous hashtag that absolves people from critical thought?

And please don't, in turn, belittle or reduce me by believing what I say simply because I'm a woman. What a risky message to be spreading. I and everyone else should treat women the way I treat men: I am suspicious of all of you. It doesn't matter what anatomy you were born with.

We recently saw firsthand why this type of believe-all-women mentality is so hazardous and unhelpful. Case in point: Asia Argento.

On August 19, the world learned that the Italian actress/director was paying hush money to Jimmy Bennett, a former child actor who Argento allegedly sexually assaulted in 2013, when Bennett was 17. All this happened, of course, in the wake of Argento claiming to have been raped by Harvey Weinstein, becoming a #MeToo figurehead and the voice of sexual-abuse survivors everywhere.

As if the bombshell news wasn't bad enough, Argento denied the allegations and decided it would be best to drag the name of her late boyfriend, Anthony Bourdain, into the mess she created, putting the blame on him along with her alleged victim.

"Subsequent to my exposure in the Weinstein case, Bennett—who was then undergoing severe economic problems and who had previously undertaken legal actions against his own family requesting millions in damages—unexpectedly made an exorbitant request of money from me," Argento wrote in a public statement on August 21. "Bennett knew my boyfriend, Anthony Bourdain, was a man of great perceived wealth and had his own reputation as a beloved public figure to protect. Anthony insisted the matter be handled privately and…personally undertook to help Bennett economically, upon the condition that we would no longer suffer any further intrusions in our life."

But then, one day later, TMZ published a series of leaked text messages between Argento and a friend, along with a photo of Argento and Bennett in bed, confirming the allegations.

So, guess what, ladies? We can be just as conniving, cunning, cut-throat, and manipulative as men. Why is this so painful for women to admit? I find it empowering to know that my gender is as stunningly vicious—if not more so—as the opposite sex. We might not be as violent, sexually or otherwise, but what we lack here we make up for in other ways. Argento is a perfect example of this.

After my article "Can We Talk About Toxic Femininity?" came out in the August issue of this magazine, a group of Argento's supporters and fellow Weinstein survivors—Rose McGowan, Rosanna Arquette, Mira Sorvino, and Zoë Brock, to name a few—quickly came to her defense. They were up in arms. How dare I question a survivor? How dare I suggest that Asia was using #MeToo for personal advancement? How dare I share an opinion that doesn't align with their claims? How dare I think for myself!

Just as many women who press charges against their rapist are then slandered—discredited by things that have nothing to do with the case in hand—these victims of Harvey Weinstein quickly perpetuated this same behavior. There was not one logical response to me from any of them. It was only things like: "You're a cunt," "Anthony would despise you," "Get fucked," and "You write for Penthouse." I was called a misogynist, alt-right, and many other derogatory and untrue names that people use to discredit others these days. Argento's lawyers even sent a letter demanding the article be taken down, and an apology issued.

This group is clearly not a fan of the free press.

A now-vanished blog was created in support of Asia, though it was basically a burn book about me. It was supposed to highlight Argento's activism work; they ran out of material quickly. These women shared it on Facebook and Twitter. They had a friend, Louise Godbold, who calls herself a "trauma nerd" in her Twitter bio, write an article about me, which said: "You are protecting yourself from feelings that the primitive part of your brain has long repressed, believing that they will literally kill you, you become an enemy to yourself...and in doing so, you have internalized the abuser."

Then on July 12, to show their support of the courageous whistleblower Argento, dozens of these "silence breakers"

wrote an open letter to the *Los Angeles Times,* which stank of self-righteousness and faux martyrdom.

"One of the most vocal and unwavering figures in the #MeToo movement has been Asia Argento," it stated. "At the center of our community, Asia has stood, her fist in the air, fighting daily not just for justice for those of us she has come to know, but for abused people the world over. Asia has now found herself on the receiving end of vicious cyberbullying and repulsive slander at the hands of internet trolls who hold her responsible for Anthony's death. She has been accused of everything from causing her boyfriend's suicide to trying to use her 'survivor status' and the #MeToo movement to advance her career."

Hollywood's self-appointed leaders of #MeToo went on to show just how disconnected they are from sexual assault—unless it has to do with rich, powerful, famous men. Mira Sorvino asked me why I hadn't gone "public" with my own rape that occurred at age 15. She said she found it "awfully convenient" of me to mention my rape in my article, now of all times. This is the same woman who claims to have so much love and compassion for all survivors and "broken people." Mira, I have a question: What if Harvey Weinstein is a survivor? What if he is a broken person? Should we have compassion for him? Would you? After all, you say you stand by ALL survivors.

Like most rape victims, I didn't get to go "public" with my rape. I didn't tell anyone about it, besides my boyfriend at the time, until a few years later when my therapist at drug rehab helped me painfully tell my parents what had occurred and had been a catalyst for a major drug addiction at a young age.

They call themselves "silence breakers," but they didn't break their silence until it benefitted them to do so. Until their careers in Hollywood had dwindled down. After they had been in movies produced by Weinstein. What about this is supposed to make me feel as if these people are victims, silence breakers, advocates, activists, or any of the other names they use to describe themselves? Most abuse survivors don't get to be angry when their survivor label doesn't get them invited to the Golden Globes.

The response from these crusaders to Argento's alleged sexual assault of a minor—a kid she'd known since he was seven years old, when he played her son in a movie—has shown

BRITISH *GQ* JUST AWARDED MCGOWAN FOR HER "BRAVERY." THEY MUST NOT HAVE SEEN THE CLIP WHERE SHE WAS UNABLE TO HANDLE BEING ASKED A SIMPLE QUESTION ABOUT HER EXPERIENCE WITH WEINSTEIN BY A GROUP OF WOMEN.

how badly Hollywood needs to step aside from the #MeToo movement.

Rosanna Arquette blamed it all on Harvey Weinstein. Maybe Weinstein put a gun to Argento's head and made her have sex with Jimmy Bennett? Meanwhile, Rose McGowan asked people to "be gentle" with Argento in a now-deleted tweet, a stark contrast to her usual demands of how to treat people (men) who have been accused of sexual assault.

McGowan had been Argento's No. 1 enabler, rushing to her side after Bourdain's suicide. She even intervened and spoke for Argento in the days after his death, calling her "a remarkable human and brave survivor," reminding us how Asia is a "victim," and disclosing private information about Bourdain without his family's consent.

But what I find even more pathetic and most telling is how quickly McGowan has distanced herself from Argento. She quickly tweeted that she only got to know Asia in the last ten months—when last November Argento was calling McGowan "my sister." Later, after TMZ leaked the incriminating text messages between Argento and a "source" (who turned out to be McGowan's partner, Rain Dove), McGowan got on her digital soapbox to reprimand her so-called friend:

"Asia you were my friend. I loved you. You've spent and risked a lot to stand with the MeToo movement. I really hope you find your way through this process to rehabilitation and betterment," she said. "Anyone can be better—I hope you can be, too. Do the right thing. Be honest. Be fair. Let justice stay its course. Be the person you wish Harvey could have been."

This really makes me wonder: Do any of these women actually stand for anything? British *GQ* just awarded McGowan the Inspiration Award for her "bravery." They must not have seen the clip where McGowan was unable to handle being asked a simple question about her experience with Weinstein by a group of women. I guess the trauma therapy she received on her reality show didn't work.

Another completely illogical excuse these actresses have been spewing after Argento's sexual assault became public is that "victims become victimizers." Since when did this shit become acceptable or have any kind of relevance? The Boston Strangler was a sexual-abuse victim, so does that exonerate him? There are many people who suffer abuse, sexual and otherwise, and do not go on to hurt others in the way they've been hurt. This is a pathetic attempt to justify Argento's behavior. Watching the women who have been leading the celebrity side of #MeToo use this defense is cringe-worthy to say the least.

But what's even sadder is the fact that thousands of women who have actually been raped and assaulted believed Argento was a voice for them. Women who maybe hadn't had the chance to get justice or feel any type of closure or healing had found a hero in her. Argento preyed upon these women and victimized them yet again with her lies. I said it in "Toxic

WHAT I DON'T RESPECT IS CO-OPTING A MOVEMENT ABOUT SOMETHING VERY REAL FOR SELF-SERVING PERSONAL GAIN, AND TAKING WORDS LIKE *TRAUMA, VICTIM, ASSAULT, RAPE,* AND *ACTIVIST* AND DILUTING THEIR POWERFUL MEANINGS IN ORDER TO MANIPULATE THE MASSES.

Femininity" and I will say it again: I do not believe Asia Argento was raped by Weinstein. I don't believe Rose McGowan was, either. Their own accounts of what transpired do not constitute rape.

Has this affected the case against Harvey Weinstein? Absolutely. Has this affected #MeToo? Without a fucking doubt. I often wonder why Ronan Farrow even included Argento's problematic story in his Pulitzer Prize-winning piece for the *New Yorker*. How did an award-winning investigative journalist not know about what happened between Argento and Jimmy Bennett?

Anna Silman, senior culture writer at *New York* magazine's women's site The Cut, is a perfect example of someone who's been brainwashed by this glorified victim-centric rhetoric that's poisoning our younger generation of women.

In a published conversation between Silman and a much more logical and reality-based thinker, The Cut's editor in chief Stella Bugbee, Silman states that she finds it hard to be angry at Argento because she's a victim of Weinstein and because her boyfriend, Bourdain, just died. She says her first impulse was to defend Argento. She does admit this impulse is hypocritical and I respect her honesty, but the entire convo also makes me sad to see how many young, successful, smart women have fallen victim to being a victim. Silman also says, "Asia Argento is 'our' girl. We have a vested interest in her narrative. But I think what we've learned in the past year is that a lot of these narratives are not as simple as victim and perpetrator, good vs. evil."

For me, I choose not to call myself a "victim" or "survivor" or any other word that wraps my identity into what happened to me when I was 15. That is my personal choice. Though I certainly respect and understand why someone else would absolutely identify using these words.

What I don't respect is co-opting a movement about something very real and very important for self-serving personal gain. What I don't respect is taking words like *trauma, victim, assault, rape,* and *activist* and diluting their powerful meanings in order to manipulate the masses. I do not respect the idea of blindly believing someone simply because she's a woman.

While the media and internet continue to offer up think pieces about the #MeToo movement being derailed by egos and lies, the silence of Anthony Bourdain's friends and family is deafening. We now know Argento is capable of lying about, well, everything. The content of her and Bourdain's last phone calls and text exchanges remain a mystery, but if recent events are any indication, it's most likely that Argento has more victims than Jimmy Bennett and #MeToo.

Leah McSweeney is founder and CEO of Married to the Mob clothing line and cohost of the podcast Improper Etiquette, with hip-hop radio personality Laura Stylez.

MUSIC AS APHRODISIAC

BY ALAN M. DERSHOWITZ

WHEN I was an adolescent growing up in Brooklyn during the 1940s and early 50s, my friends used to sit around and speculate as to which music was most likely to get us to first base, second base, third base, and the holy grail of home plate. We, of course, had no hard evidence because none of us had ever made it beyond second base. I myself had been tagged out trying to steal second, and I'd never gotten any further.

The crooner contenders were Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, and Bing Crosby. As a classical music aficionado, my favorite was Ravel's "Bolero," which increased its tempo until it reached a musical climax.

I recall a biology class in which a teacher was trying to teach us the distinction between human characteristics mandated by evolution and those which were merely side effects of those fundamentals. He mentioned music as one of those side effects. I respectfully disagreed, arguing that music was a Darwinian aid to reproduction, much like smell and beauty. The teacher rejected this and the students snickered. But I knew I was onto something. As I got older I realized, of course, that I was correct. Music is an aphrodisiac. It sets the mood. It enhances desire. It facilitates consent.

Filmmakers understand music's power. I recall watching an early cut of the Oscar-winning film *Reversal of Fortune,* which was about my successful appeal of Claus von Bülow's attempted murder conviction. Despite the fact that my son was one of the producers, I didn't like what I saw. I thought the film dragged and its scenes were disconnected. I sheepishly told my son of my reaction, worried he would be upset. He smiled and said, "Wait for the music."

He was right. When the music was added, everything changed: no drag, no disconnects—everything flowed beautifully, and the film was highly praised and positively reviewed. The music made all the difference, providing the emotional connectivity and punch.

So what is it about music that has the capacity to change human receptivity through emotion? Music, after all, is just a series of sounds: melodies, rhythms, and volumes. But great music bypasses the rational and goes directly to our emotions. It makes us feel sad, happy, sexy, bold, relaxed, and every other emotion.

I recently had the occasion to speak to a leading country and western musician. I put the question to him, asking why music had such an effect on us. His answer was, "Nostalgia." His music, he said, recalls emotions and feelings of days gone by. It evokes memories. It appeals to the unconscious and brings happiness or sadness, depending on the nature of the memory.

While I was researching this topic, I came upon a new genre of music: the erotic music video, in which music is accompanied by visual images calculated to arouse sexual feelings. Personally, I found this genre unappealing, because it lacked any form of subtlety. These videos focused too specifically on the sexual, rather than on the erotic. With music, subtlety is essential.

Music, like any art form, must appeal to multiple senses. You not only hear great music, you feel it, you experience it, you remember it, and you replay it in your head. In my case, I hum and whistle the music I like, much to the annoyance of those around me, since I do neither particularly well. Music has a power that transcends art itself. It is a form of language, a means of communication, and a tool of persuasion.

Yes, music is an aphrodisiac, along with many other forms of communication. I think I was right when I corrected my biology teacher so many years ago. Although it's true that animals are fully capable of reproducing without the aid of music, for human beings the experience is more pleasurable when accompanied by the right tune, beat, and rhythm.

And after a lifetime of experience, I have concluded that my Brooklyn friends were right and I was right. Set the mood with a little Frank Sinatra, follow it up with an appropriately selected Beatles song, and then on to "Bolero."

Alan M. Dershowitz is the Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law Emeritus at Harvard Law School and author of The Case Against Impeaching Trump. Follow him at @AlanDersh

ORIGINAL PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / BY NIKKYTOK

PANTRY HOS

What were Sandra and Peaches thinking when they decided to go for it on the kitchen table? That thing is made of glass, ladies! One good bash and they would both be lying in a bed of shards. Luckily, no one was hurt in the making of these orgasms.

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ALLIES MATTER

SINCE WHEN IS IT THE AMERICAN WAY TO DISRESPECT OUR FRIENDS?

BY MATT GALLAGHER

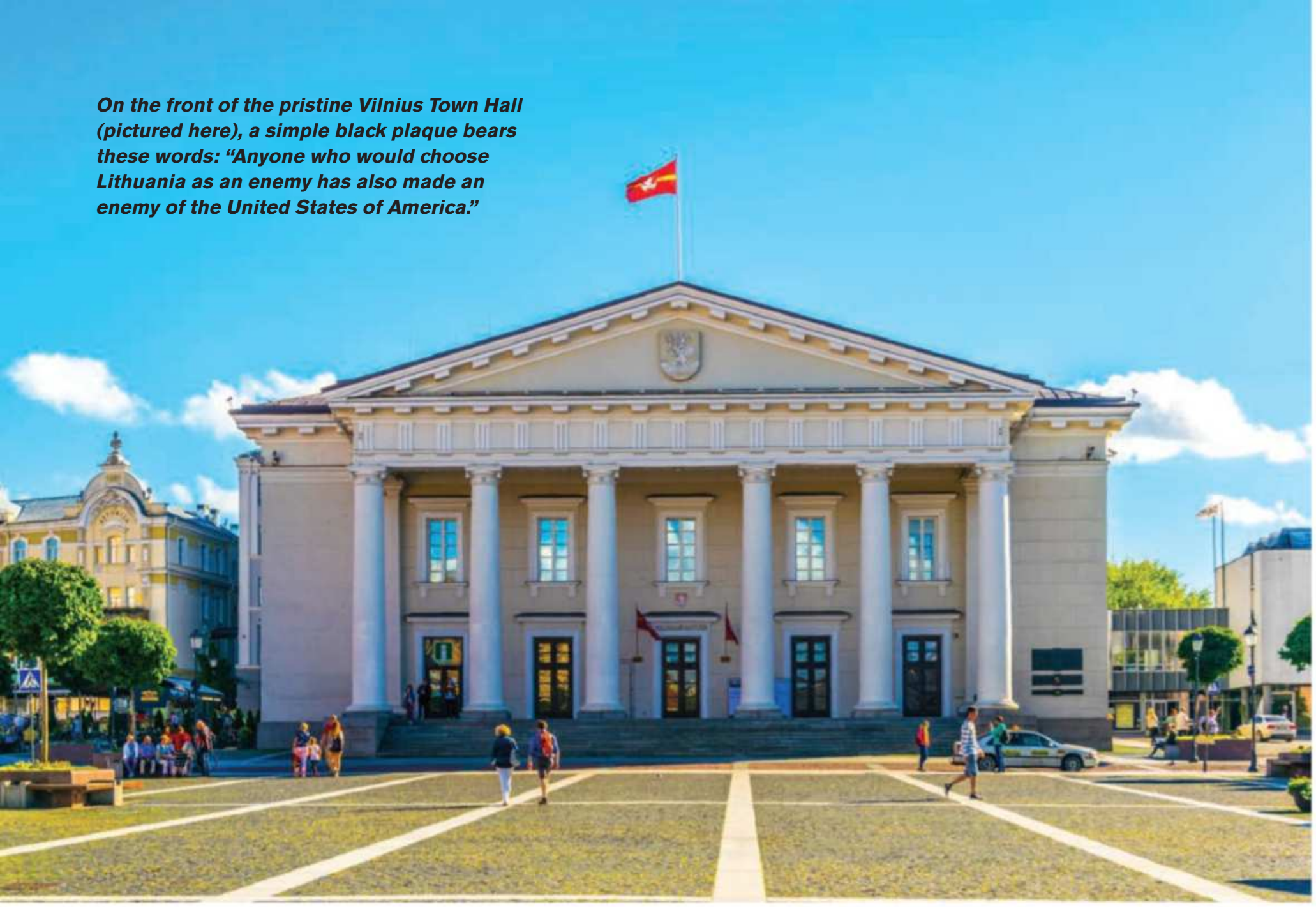
MY family and I spent a couple weeks across the pond this summer, including a swing through the Baltics. I'd never traveled to that northeastern corner of Europe before, and it didn't take long for me to get the sense that American history classes might be well served to spend at least a day exploring this area's sagas. The Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians HAVE SEEN SOME SHIT. Being surrounded on all sides with rising and falling empires over many centuries will have that effect, I guess. Museums in Lithuania carried the very direct and very real titles of "Museum of Genocide" and "Museum of Occupation."

The other immediate reaction to the region? They adore Americans. Not in a shallow, thank-you-for-your-tourist-money way, either. As any citizen who has gone abroad since, say, 2003 or so knows, traveling while American can be a complicated thing. No, dude, I don't want to talk Bush-Kerry right now, I'm trying to take a leak. No, glowering French waitress, I'm not personally responsible for America's geopolitical mishaps for the past 70 years, but I would like to order lunch. So it was a bit bizarre to encounter open and earnest America-lovin' in the Baltic countries.

A little context goes a long way to understanding why. A friend who lives there describes them as "the Kurds of Europe." It's an apt comparison. All the peoples described have suffered immensely for generations, having to put their sense of national identity and pride on the back burner while [insert fleeting regional power here] controls them for access to natural resources, ports, labor, and taxes. America, for all our blundering stupidity sometimes, offers something else entirely: the prospect of freedom. We can often take freedom for granted because it's all we've known for a long time. These folks know better.

It's why, on the front of the pristine Vilnius Town Hall, a simple black plaque bears these words: "Anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy has also made an enemy of the United States of America."

George W. Bush said that while visiting Vilnius in 2002. (Am I earnestly quoting President Bush now? For fuck's sake. 2018, everyone!) Our alliance and friendship with the Baltic nations are vital to them. They've reciprocated. All three countries have sent soldiers to Iraq and Afghanistan per our request. All three countries have lost soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. My Scout platoon served alongside an Estonian platoon in Iraq in 2008. They were squared the fuck away, professional and lethal like any good infantry platoon should be. I'll never forget their lieutenant's answer



On the front of the pristine Vilnius Town Hall (pictured here), a simple black plaque bears these words: "Anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy has also made an enemy of the United States of America."

IT'S NOT OUR ALLIES WHO ARE LEECHES, BUT EVERYDAY AMERICAN CITIZENS WHO LACK AN APPRECIATION FOR THE PLENTITUDE WE LIVE WITH—AND HOW IT WAS ATTAINED.

as to why his men were so good at finding hidden weapons caches in the Iraqi desert.

"Our grandparents had to hide family valuables from Stalin's dogs," he said, his soldiers pulling sniper-rifle parts from an irrigation ditch. "We were raised with that. This? Play for kids."

All of that travelogue and historical overview is a long preamble to the point of this month's column: Our allies' interests *are* American interests. American interests are, in turn, our allies' interests. It's how the international order works and how it was designed in the aftermath of World War II by the Greatest Generation, who were most interested in ensuring their descendants didn't have to fight a World War III. That the globe seems to have collectively lost its mind and forgotten those lessons just as said Greatest Generation is dying off en masse can't be a coincidence.

Is NATO perfect? Fuck, no; it's flawed as hell. It's absolute bullshit that Luxembourg (among others) agreed to commit two percent of its GDP to national defense and hasn't even pretended to meet that commitment. There's no doubt some European allies have gotten too comfortable with American might protecting them.

But is that all a net negative? Oversight over European political affairs and influence over their trade is arguably one of America's greatest achievements. You like traveling on an American passport? You like going to Normandy and being thanked for something your grandfather did when he was 19? You like living in a (mostly) hegemonic world that values American ideals and currency? Yeah, being a citizen of a superpower is pretty swell. It comes with responsibilities, too. It's not our allies who are leeches, but everyday American citizens who lack an appreciation for the plentitude we live with—and how it was attained.

Trump-style isolationism isn't just shortsighted and childish, though. It's a betrayal of our predecessors' past work and our descendants' futures. As I watched Cheeto Mussolini at the NATO summit say he doesn't need congressional approval to withdraw from our most important military alliance, and then a couple days later play Reek to Putin's Ramsay Bolton in the world's worst *Game of Thrones* cosplay, I was filled with a cold rage I still have a hard time putting to words. This bone-spurred, draft-dodging motherfucker had the audacity to tell countries that have sent young men to die for our military adventures they're not doing their fair share? *Fuck you, transaction man,* I thought. *The Estonians we served alongside would carve up your fat orange ass. The Estonians we served alongside have done more for America than you ever will.*

That was all true. It remains true. But so what? Other than yielding this angry column, my rage changes nothing. It's a howl into the void. In the end, soldiers get screwed. That's a story as old as war, a story as old as humanity. I know that. You know that. *C'est la guerre* and shit.

Still, though, it's all strange. It's all different. Used to be that we tried to fuck up our enemy's soldiers. In 2018, America's going after our allies instead.

Matt Gallagher is a U.S. Army veteran of Iraq and the author of the novel Youngblood (Atria/Simon & Schuster).

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RATING OURSELVES TO DEATH

ONE GUY'S ARGUMENTS AGAINST WHAT WE WERE TAUGHT TO BELIEVE

BY JOE DEROSA

"You have no choice. You have owners."—George Carlin

I'M not one to pat myself on the back. I take much more pleasure in self-annihilation. I'm not a cutter or anything like that, but I often indulge in the unbridled pummeling of my soul. This is the primary reason I've lasted as long as I have in show business. A low self-image can help elevate you to great heights in this field. Dear God or Universe or Abstract Higher Power, I thank you for blessing me with almost no self-esteem, allowing the constant rejection and ridicule of my profession to slide right off of me.

Still, when a brief, infrequent moment of me being proud of myself occurs, I like to recognize it. One of these rare happenings took place recently during an Uber trip. My driver and I were engrossed in a typical ride-share conversation, something about how, back in his country, he's a neurosurgeon who owns a hospital, but here he has to drive a Prius for money. I asked him his thoughts on being rated by every single passenger, which led to my complaints about being rated by every single driver, which turned into both of us basically proclaiming, "Fuck user reviews and anything else that resembles them."

And that's when I gently stroked my ego. I remembered years ago saying Twitter fandom was no different than the cigarette craze of the 1950s, suggesting that we were rushing blindly into new-product indulgence without thinking about the potential ramifications. My point was we needed to pump the brakes because—call me paranoid—a platform where people thoughtlessly express their thoughts might lead to unfortunate circumstances. You're bound to end up saying some shit you should've kept quiet about, like, "I've always been very attracted to my aunt." Well, my prediction came true. In spades. People have gotten themselves fired, divorced, smeared, and ousted all from not thinking before they type.

What I never expected, though, was that Twitter, more or less a service initially meant for jokes about when and where you were eating lunch, would eventually become another leg of the American corporatocracy. Yes, I'm one of those people who believes in the ownership class. And you can call me crazy if you want, but that's subjective. What's absolutely provable, however, is that each of us has become a self-contained corporation, relying on the approval of our investors to continue life's day-to-day operations.

The idea of corporatocracy used to be one of shadowy businessmen sitting in a penthouse and pulling the strings, their decisions causing butterfly effects that would eventually impact our lives. Nowadays, it's right inside our collective pocket. The corporatocracy's come home, moved in, and made its looming presence known from breakfast to bedtime.

By the way, the term "corporatocracy" has appeared three times now on my computer screen and still has the red squiggly line underneath it. Spellcheck doesn't recognize the word. Why? Probably because most folks dismiss it as a loony conspiracy theory. Despite a very evident relationship between money and power—decades of millionaire businessmen and moguls facilitating and occupying our highest political offices—ownership and governing are rarely mentioned in the same sentence. The average person can't stand to think that the voters are not the true voice of this country—the financial backers are. They control big business, big business funds our leaders and information streams, and those parties tell us where and how to spend our cash. The system makes perfect sense. The power structure in a capitalistic empire is only as sustainable as its revenue stream. Fuck carbon. Money determines our nation's global footprint.

But let's get back to the revelation that this is now hitting us on a much more personal level. Twitter followers, Amazon ratings, Yelp reviews, public aggregators…the list goes on. With a few quick strikes of a button or a hastily written commentary, life as you know it can be ended instantly, all at the hands of somebody else—a stranger, even, a faceless investor. Is there a single aspect of our lives directly relating to our livelihood, happiness, and survival that isn't regularly vetted by others? Poorly rated ride-share drivers don't get to make a living. Poorly rated passengers don't get to share rides. Poorly executed online posts lead to superbly expedited public executions. Your job depends on your lifestyle, your lifestyle is displayed on Facebook, and your Facebook friends can cost you all of the above. Right or wrong, right or left, black or white, it doesn't matter. The board will be reviewing your every move, and you best pray they give approval. In other words, don't get too comfortable or take too much liberty.

PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK.COM: BY 13_PHUNKOD

YOUR JOB DEPENDS ON YOUR LIFESTYLE, YOUR LIFESTYLE IS DISPLAYED ON FACEBOOK, AND YOUR FACEBOOK FRIENDS CAN COST YOU ALL OF THE ABOVE. RIGHT OR WRONG, IT DOESN'T MATTER. THE BOARD WILL BE REVIEWING YOUR EVERY MOVE, AND YOU BEST PRAY THEY GIVE APPROVAL.

And the most frightening aspect of the decimation of our personal freedom is that we brought it on ourselves. We dove headfirst into Twitter and the like. As a culture obsessed with convenience, we demanded ultimate interconnectivity and a communism of expression. Everyone's got your number, everyone's a critic, and everything is on demand. Your digital news feed delivers the stories you want to read, your music apps tell you the songs you'll like to hear, we block or chastise the folks we disagree with, and the only face we see through a camera lens is our own. Dictating to our phones has led to us dictating over one another. If we don't get what we want exactly how we want it, we strike hard and fast.

Groceries, kitchen appliances, and crates filled with your favorite curated items can be delivered to your doorstep at a moment's notice. It seems harmless until you consider that the thumbs-down you give the delivery guy might force him to live in the box from which he just removed your refrigerator.

This abundance of self-servitude is deadly. Conversation has become clicking and expression emojified. We can't be bothered with the pains of proper punctuation and spelling, let alone the pitfalls of properly exchanging ideas. The inconvenience of considering the needs and wants of others has become an airborne virus, and we're locked in our bubbles, immune systems weakening by the second. My hat's off to Jello Biafra. The Dead Kennedys' finest work, *Give Me Convenience or Give Me Death,* has taken on a new, startling meaning.

As my Uber driver and I wrapped up our conversation that afternoon, I wondered what the next destructive cultural phenomenon would be that we'd excitedly embrace. When we pulled up to my destination, we pleasantly exchanged a simple sentiment: "Great talking to you." I hopped out of the car smiling, noticing a gentle lift in my step. Sounds corny, I know, but it's true. Strange to think elation could come from something so basic. The conversation got me high—okay, fine, *buzzed*. All right, now I'm just trying to sound like Elizabeth Gilbert, but you get what I'm saying. I got out of the bubble and it felt good.

I don't have an abundance of hope. I barely have a reserve. Maybe a few scraps. And as a strong believer in the American corporatocracy, I accepted long ago that the plans for this place have already been laid and put into motion. Everything I'm talking about here further supports that opinion. But it's nice once in a while to remember I can be occasionally right about the impending awfulness of everything and completely wrong about the extinction of civilized interaction. I'm happy to say the latter still exists. And when even those tiny, beautiful moments completely disappear—and believe me, they will—I'll be fine. I don't believe I deserve to live in a better world. Another point for shitty self-esteem.

Joe DeRosa is an L.A.-based comedian, writer, director, and actor (Better Call Saul and Louie). His multiple stand-up specials and albums can be found online, as well as his podcasts We'll See You in Hell and Emotional Hangs.

BRITISH INVASION

MY husband is the perfect British gentleman…at least in public. He's outrageously charming and comes across as possibly too polite to engage in sex. With dark hair and bright blue eyes, he looks a lot like Richard Armitage. With a voice made for the theater, he certainly sounds like him. When he finally asked me out, I discovered that the prim and proper facade conceals one of the filthiest humans I've ever encountered.

At dinner on that first date, he was the consummate gentleman: pulling out my chair, opening doors, standing when I came back to the table from the bathroom. His manners were impeccable. I felt a little bad at how wildly attracted to him I was—it seemed inappropriate. But just watching him roll his sleeves up to expose his muscled forearms had me rubbing my thighs together in frustration. I wanted to see what would happen if he broke the rules just once and wondered if I could be the woman to push him over the edge.

I tried rubbing his leg with my foot under the table, but he only apologized for being in my space and moved back. I attempted innuendo after innuendo, but he never took the bait to join me in the gutter. I was blatantly checking him out and he didn't even seem to notice.

By the end of the night, I had pretty much given up. There was no cracking him. I was unsurprised when he opened the passenger door to his Audi and escorted me up the path to my bungalow. I was pondering the pallid question of whether he would politely kiss me on the cheek or chastely on the lips when all of a sudden he took me by the shoulders and pushed me forcefully up against the front door. With his whole body pressed against mine, I could feel that he was not as unaffected by the evening as I had thought. He was deliciously hard.

He leaned in and kissed me with force, erotically sliding his tongue against mine, domineering and decidedly impolite. I was stunned.

"May I come in?" he asked. Though it wasn't really a question.

I fumbled with my keys until I got the door open. We kissed wildly for a few more minutes before he murmured, "I'd like to blindfold you now. May I do that?"

I nodded, not trusting myself to speak coherently. I couldn't believe it—this guy was my every fantasy come to life.

He led me over to the couch, and I expected to sit down, but instead he bent me over the wide arm. He took his tie off and gently slid it over my eyes, knotting it behind my head. The last thing I saw before he deprived me of sight was the wicked gleam in his gorgeous blue eyes that I had been trying to instigate all night.

How had I ended up bent over and blindfolded that quickly? I begged the gods that he would keep moving that fast because I was painfully aroused.

I heard the rustle of clothes followed by a zipper. I was about ready to beg.

"I have a bit of an oral fixation, Miss Sanford. By that I mean I derive intense pleasure from using my tongue, both to please you and to tell you what I'm doing. Would you like to know what I'm going to do, Miss Sanford?"

I nodded again.

"I'm going to flip that tight little skirt up over your plump arse to find out whether you're wearing any panties. I think you're a naughty girl and I suspect that not only will I find that you've forgone proper undergarments this evening, but that your pussy is already slick and ready for me."

My cheeks were burning with mortification, but it was nothing compared to the heat I could feel between my legs. I wondered if I could grind my clit against the couch without him noticing. The sound of his perfect British accent and that deep voice articulating such filthy words was its own kind of foreplay.

He ran his hands down my thighs and then slid them back up, pushing my skirt over my ass. He was right. I hadn't worn any panties. I shivered with arousal, knowing that my bare pussy and ass were

HE TOOK HIS TIE OFF AND SLID IT OVER MY EYES. THE LAST THING I SAW WAS THE WICKED GLEAM IN HIS EYES.

totally exposed from behind.

I could feel his breath against my skin as his thumbs moved between my ass cheeks and down, spreading my pussy lips.

"May I lick this gorgeous arse and cunt? I desperately need to taste you."

I nodded again, but this time I couldn't hold back a moan.

He kneeled down behind me and his warm, wet tongue found my clit, parting my folds and delving down to flick back and forth against it. For long, torturously pleasurable moments, he worked my bud like no other man ever had. I didn't think I could come from oral like this, but found my hips bucking against the couch as I rode out my first orgasm.

I had barely stopped shaking from the first one before he redoubled his efforts, moving his tongue harder and faster against me. Then he pressed a thumb into my pussy and I thought I was going to die from pleasure as he ground it against my G spot in time to his strokes against my clit. I came again, and I didn't think I could take any more, but he just kept going.

He traced his wet thumb down from my pussy and began stroking my clit with it in perfect tiny circles. He seemed to know my body better than I did.

Then suddenly I felt his tongue against my asshole—no one had ever touched me there before. It felt wrong and dirty and exciting and sinfully erotic all at once. His slick licking turned to gentle probing, parting my most secret place with his tongue. As I felt him slide inside just a little, I came again, now mindless with pleasure.

He stopped what he was doing and stood up, disappearing for a moment, leaving me gasping on the couch, still draped over the upholstered arm. When he returned, I felt his cock against my

thigh. He had put on a condom, thank the gods—he was finally going to fuck me!

"Now that I know how you taste, I have to know how it feels to slide my cock deep inside that delicious pussy."

I wanted him to just ram it inside me, but like everything he did, he tortured me by working it in slowly, using little strokes to fuck me deeper and deeper. Once he was all the way in, he fucked me as hard as I was craving, reaching around my waist with one hand to rub my clit again.

"I'm going to lick your taste off my thumb now, and then I'm going to push it inside that tight virgin ass. I want to feel you come with it in there. If you're a good girl, maybe next time I'll let you have my cock in there."

I barely lasted long enough to feel something penetrate my ass for the first time before another orgasm rocked through me. I'd lost track of how many times I had come by the time he finally came as well.

He was certainly a gentleman in that regard, but was not as straitlaced as I had imagined.

—E. Sanford, Tucson, Arizona

TOKYO BATH BOMB

AT the end of a recent work trip, I flew to Japan for three days. I'd been in Singapore on business and decided last-minute to pursue some meetings in Tokyo before heading back to San Francisco. It was my first visit to the bustling, high-rise city, and I had

a great time: the food, the people, the street energy. There was another, more hedonistic reason I enjoyed myself, too.

On my second day, after multiple meetings, I decided to go straight back to my hotel. The idea was to grab some room service and then call it an early night. A couple blocks from the hotel, on foot, I came across a sign that had some Japanese script and the word BATH. There was a neon image of those squiggly lines meaning water. In my mind, I pictured a spa—Jacuzzis, plush towels, some soft Japanese music coming from speakers, potted plants. I liked the idea of that. I wasn't good for much more. A spa, a sushi dinner, sake, hotel bed. I wandered into the place.

Greeting me at the front desk was a woman of about 25. Her black hair was styled in a straight bob with bangs that grazed her forehead. Her porcelain skin had tiny freckles that trailed across her nose, and a single swipe of green eyeliner enhanced her almond-shaped eyes.

"Welcome, sir," she said in accented English. "What can I do for you today?" Beside her was another woman of the same age, also pretty, with very long eyelashes. She remained silent

"I had a long work day," I said. "I could use a little relaxation."

"Excellent, sir. Right this way," the woman who'd greeted me said. She was dressed in a snug, bright red sheath-like dress. Stepping away from the desk, she motioned for me to follow her. "We have many appealing options, and we enjoy American visitors."

I followed her down a jade-colored corridor, passing a number of wooden saloon doors. As she led me down the hall, I heard a muffled moan from behind one of the doors. That's when it dawned on me—this place offered more than Jacuzzis and shoulder rubs.

"In here, sir," the woman said as we reached a door at the end of the hall. She ushered me into a clean, attractive room. "Please place your belongings on the table and turn your phone off," she said with a giggle. "This is a no-picture, no-message zone!"

I smiled at her laugh and did as I was told. She turned around and left.

I sat down in a bamboo chair in the corner and looked around. In the center of the room there was a circle of white marble flooring with a clawfoot tub, a folding screen with a Japanese landscape design, and a gathering of lush potted plants, some of them overflowing with bright flowers. A few minutes later, the same woman returned, now dressed in a red robe. She walked over to the tub and turned on the taps. *There's no turning back now,* I thought.

"Please, sir," she said, testing the bathwater with her hand as the tub began to fill. "Undress and get in. My name is Michiko. I'll be back to rub you down."

Rub me down? That sounded pretty good to me. "Thank you," I said.

I stripped and sank into the tub as instructed. The scent of lavender tickled my nose, and I reclined my head against the towel-covered pillow hanging from

AS THE CRIMSON BUBBLES RAN DOWN HER BODY, I WATCHED AS SHE BEGAN TO FINGER HERSELF.

the inside edge. A quiet minute passed.

"Sir?" Michiko asked from the doorway. "I am back now. Okay to enter?"

"Sure, come in."

Michiko moved toward me in her red silk robe. I was expecting her to sit or crouch behind me to rub my shoulders, but instead she knelt beside the tub and dropped her hand into the water.

"I give you premium bath, sir," she said, moving her hand back and forth through the warm water and then slowly reaching toward my cock. I guess I knew something like this might happen, but it was still a surprise to have this beautiful young woman I'd met two minutes earlier put her manicured hand around my dick. Her touch was perfect. She leaned her head toward me, pushed her painted lips to my ear, and whispered, "Do you like that, sir?" By now, my eyes were closed. I just nodded.

After a few minutes of blissful, rhythmic stroking, Michiko stood up and disrobed. I watched her flawless porcelain body bend and flex as she picked up a bottle of massage oil and drizzled it over her arms, legs, neck, tits, and ass. The streaks of oil shone against her stark white skin as she rubbed it in slowly, her eyes watching mine the whole time.

Then she grabbed a small handful of fragrant bath bombs from a nearby basket and dropped them into the tub. The water began to turn a deep, brilliant red. For a second it looked like blood.

"That's the color for love," Michiko said, watching as the dye spread through the water. Then she turned on the Jacuzzi jets and a barrage of red bubbles erupted around me.

That's when Michiko lowered one foot into the water, then the other. Not sure what to expect, I just looked up at her. A moment later she reached down and caught up a handful of bubbles, rubbing them all over her body. I watched as they trailed down her breasts and her taut stomach, then dripped off her shaved pussy at the gap between her slender thighs. Her pussy looked untouched, virginal even. I wanted a taste.

As the last crimson bubbles ran down Michiko's body, I watched as she took her index finger and began fingering herself. She closed her eyes and let her head drop back a little as she went to work on herself. It was so hot. I just sat there, motionless in the tub, staring up at this Asian beauty, with her curved, sexy hips, dark hair, and glowing skin.

In time, Michiko stopped what she was doing, as if coming back to reality. She looked down at me. "Sir, I know you want to get clean," she said in her light, musical voice. "So I help you right now."

Rubbing the oil between her thighs, Michiko crouched down in the warm red water, then came toward me, pressing her slick body against mine. Her crotch made contact with my dick.

"I'm helping to clean you now, with my soap. You understand?"

I didn't quite understand, but I knew she felt my rock-hard cock, so there was at least some level of comprehension between us. It was the most sexual excitement I'd felt in a long time, and I wasn't concerned about hiding it from her.

I put my hands on Michiko's firm, shapely tits, stroking them, and then began licking her small erect nipples. Under the

water, she slid her body against mine, up and down, back and forth, her smooth stomach rubbing against my cock, all the while taking tiny nibbles on my earlobe—it just about made me explode. I could feel her bare pussy as it grazed the head of my cock, and I had to resist the urge to slide it inside her. Somehow I behaved.

"Oh sir, look what you did to me! I might need help getting clean now!" Michiko had just stood up in the bath and I could see a trail of wetness coming from her pussy lips, dyed red from the bath bomb. She smiled at the evidence of her arousal.

Michiko then brought her crotch to my face and let me lick her pussy and thighs, the white flesh stained by the dye. My tongue traveled to her clit, and as I flicked and sucked, my hands gripping her ass, there was an intoxicating scent of lavender. I pulled her hard against my face, my tongue spreading her perfect pussy lips, making her moan a little. She began riding my face, and then mewling in a high pitch that increased in volume until she came. After that, she sagged back down against me, our bodies pressed together.

Moments later, Michiko stood me up in the tub, knelt slowly before me, and took my hard-on into her delicate mouth. I felt buzzed with the pleasure of what she was doing; her technique was perfect. She cupped my balls and gently stroked them. It only took a few minutes before I exploded into her mouth. She swallowed my come and released me. A sweet smile spread across her exquisite features, her eyes never leaving mine.

Michiko disappeared as I toweled off and changed back into my business clothes. I don't know if it was that pretty woman, the red bath bomb, or Tokyo itself, but I walked back to my hotel feeling like a new man. I glided along a street of neon, vehicle traffic, and commuters rushing home, and that night, after dinner, I slept like a rock.

—Nick B., San Francisco, California

EROTICA IRL

I NARRATE audiobooks for a living. Sometimes I do them in my home studio, but sometimes I have to work with a sound engineer to record them

I DIDN'T WANT FOREPLAY OR SWEET SEX. I JUST WANTED THE RAW ENERGY OF AN IMPROMPTU FUCK.

in a booth across town. I almost always get assigned the same guy, and I can't stand him.

It takes about three full days to record an average book, so that's three full days of being shut in a tiny sound booth with no one but Marcus, the asshole sound engineer, for company.

When we first started working together, I thought he was shy and not great with people. Then I realized he's just an asshole.

It's normal when you're in the middle of recording for the engineer to have to stop you periodically when you miss a word, say the wrong thing, or something doesn't sound right to them. There's a polite way of doing this that doesn't interfere with the narrator's flow. Marcus did not do it the polite way. I would get so annoyed with how rude he was that my voice would start to sound angry, so he stopped me even more for hitting the wrong tone.

It didn't help that most of the work I did was for romance and erotica, and I always swore he was mocking me. I don't think there's anything wrong with reading romance or raunchy books, and I really enjoyed recording them in the privacy of my home studio; but when I had to record sex scenes with Marcus listening to every word, it was miserable. I swore he was deliberately making me repeat phrases that were filthy.

I was in the studio with him on our third day of a particularly steamy romance novel when I finally snapped.

In the book, things had been building and building between two characters until they had at last reached the scene where they were going to fuck.

"…as he slammed me against the wall while still kissing me, I no longer cared about anything but the throbbing need between my thighs. I could feel the length

of his hard cock pressed against–"

"Try that again," Marcus cut in on the intercom.

I took a deep breath, trying not to roll my eyes.

"I could feel the length of his hard cock–"

"One more time."

"I could feel the length of his hard cock–"

"Try it again. Your tone changed that time."

"Of course my fucking tone changed. How many times do you want me to say cock?! Cock. Cock. COCK. Dick. Penis. Dong! There! Have you heard it enough times yet? Can you just let me do my job for once?"

The bastard was smiling like he thought my little outburst was amusing.

"No problem. Sorry you felt attacked. I'm just trying to do my job, too. Though, hearing you swear is definitely one of the perks. Also, if you say 'dong' again, I might not be able to hold it together. Fair warning."

He was trying to make a joke. How dare he be charming when I was this pissed off? How dare he also be stupidly attractive with his shaggy hair and adorable dimples while he was doing it?

I sat back down on my stool, attempting to regain some degree of dignity…which is tough after you've just yelled multiple words for male anatomy at your coworker. I took a deep breath and began to read.

"I could feel the length of his hard cock pressed against my stomach and I wanted desperately to surrender to him. I needed to feel Marcus thrust deep inside of me, claiming my maidenhead–"

I jerked up in a rage as he hit the intercom button, but he was laughing too hard to get any words out.

"Are you fucking twelve? This isn't funny! Why did you stop me?"

"You said my name instead of 'Rafe,'" he said with tears of laughter streaming down his face.

"I did not, you perv."

"Did too! Come in here and I'll play it back for you."

I stormed out the door of the sound booth and opened the door of the control booth, slamming it behind me and leaning against it with my arms crossed.

I stood there looking indignant until my own voice played through the speakers, and sure enough, I heard myself say, "I needed to feel

HE GASPED WHEN HE WAS ALL THE WAY INSIDE ME AND I BEGAN TO GRIND UP AND DOWN ON HIM.

Marcus thrust deep inside of me—"

He played it four times for me. I didn't think my cheeks could get any hotter or any redder. I was partly embarrassed by the slip, but also mortified to find that hearing the words in my own voice had caused me to realize something: I really did want Marcus to fuck me. Hate sex suddenly seemed like the best idea in the world. I couldn't explain it, but I wanted him.

I glanced up and found him staring at me from his chair. He had stopped laughing, and if the look on his face was any indicator, his thoughts were racing in the same direction as mine. There was a brief pause that was charged with electric tension, and then we both exploded toward each other in the same instant.

He overpowered me, pushing me back against the door, pinning my arms above my head with his. I found his mouth and kissed him frantically, instantly lost in the moment. His lips trailed their way to my neck, and he seemed intent on slowing things down, but I didn't want foreplay or sweet sex. I just wanted the raw energy of an impromptu fuck without making it personal. It felt like a good way to get him out of my system.

I grabbed him by the hair to stop him.

"Do you have a condom?" I asked.

"I think so," he replied, looking a little surprised, but smiling at me with his adorable dimples again.

He turned to dig through his bag and came back with the unmistakable square package. While he undid his pants and put the condom on, I dropped my jeans and panties to the floor and got on all fours.

He hesitated behind me, leaning down to press more kisses down my spine.

"Why don't we slow things down?" he murmured against my skin. "I want this to be good for you, too. Let me make you come first."

"Seriously, just shut up and fuck me."

He hesitated again, so I got back up, pushed him down on the floor, and climbed on top. Sometimes a girl has to do it herself to get what she wants.

He was chuckling at my aggressive move, but stopped as I lowered myself onto his cock. He gasped when he was all the way inside of me and I began to grind up and down on him. I was riding him with utter abandon, for the first time in my life not giving a shit what he thought or how he felt. I rubbed my clit as I slammed against him. When I was about to come, I knew I was digging the nails of my other hand into his chest, but didn't care. The idea of hurting him a little turned me on that little extra bit I needed to finally come.

He hadn't finished yet, and I contemplated leaving him like that to punish him for being such an asshole, but decided it felt good enough that I would be punishing myself, too. I kept grinding along his cock, slapping our hips together roughly. He didn't last much longer, squeezing his hands into fists and groaning as he finished, too.

I got up, leaving him to deal with the condom mess, and pulled my underwear and pants back on. He tried to kiss me, but I pushed him away.

"This doesn't mean I like you," I said, turning to go back into the recording booth.

He was laughing again. "Then what the hell was that?"

"Hate sex. Good hate sex, but hate sex nonetheless. Ready to keep going?"

I didn't wait for a response, shutting myself back in the other room and finding my place in the book again. I could see him grinning through the glass, but chose to ignore him completely.

We got through the rest of that day without me having to repeat another filthy word.

—Camille S., New York, New York

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